

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE

For pre-decision scrutiny by:

Environment PDS Committee on 25 March 2014

Date: 2nd April 2014

Decision Type: Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: GRANT FUNDING FROM THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TO SUPPORT THE WOODLAND IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME

Contact Officer: Pherenice Worsley-Buck, Community Forest Development Officer
Tel: 020 8461 7521 E-mail: Pherenice.worsley-buck@bromley.gov.uk

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

Wards: Borough-wide

1. Reason for report

Following a successful grant application by the Borough, an award of £126,420 has been made by the Forestry Commission under its Woodland Improvement Grant scheme. This report outlines the proposed improvements at 30 of the Council's woodland sites, and requests formal agreement to accept the grant funding.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Agrees to accept the £126,420 grant offered by the Forestry Commission to enhance and sustain 30 of Bromley's woodland sites, as identified in Appendix A.
- 2.2 To add the scheme to the capital programme, £77,410 for 2014/15 and £49,010 for 2015/16

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council; Quality Environment
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: £126,420
 2. Ongoing costs: No additional revenue costs:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Parks Development
 4. Total current budget for this head: £126,420 and £303,590
 5. Source of funding: Grant funding from the Forestry Commission and existing revenue budget for 2014/15
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 1fte
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 150 hours
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Not Applicable:
 2. Call-in: Applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All visitors accessing woodland sites
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) supports capital investment in woodlands to create, enhance and sustain the social, environmental and economic public benefits that woodlands provide. Each fund is cash-limited within each region, each year, and all land owners are entitled to apply. The grant is not expected to continue beyond 2016 due to further constraints on central Government expenditure. No information on potential replacement grants is yet available. If the Council does not accept this award it is unlikely that grant funding on this scale will be available again for woodland management, particularly for sites that have no Friends Group associated with them.
- 3.2 The London Borough of Bromley is responsible for managing 552 hectares of woodland. A total of 30 woodland sites throughout the borough will benefit from this grant, and approximately one half of these sites have a Friends Group attached to them. Appendix A lists the sites affected by this grant award. Where woodlands have an associated Friends Group, the work will be delivered in partnership with volunteers and by engaging the local community. The allocation of both LB Bromley staffing costs and volunteer labour towards this programme counts towards the match funding identified elsewhere in this report.
- 3.3 The award is based on a schedule of standard costs set by the Forestry Commission. A range of costs for operations and tasks has been independently calculated based on typical scenarios, including materials, labour and supervision costs. The WIG contribution rates are variable and range from a minimum of 50% to a maximum of 80% and is applied to these standard costs to set a grant rate for the work. The rate of grant for a work item is not negotiable.
- 3.4 Bromley's contribution to the grant works will be to the value of £31,605; this will be a combination of expenditure from Council budgets (50%) and an 'in kind' contribution, in the form of existing staff time and work undertaken by Friends and volunteer groups (50%). It is proposed that the expenditure will be met from the Woodlands Estate Works budget and the Nature Conservation Projects budget. The WIG funding also includes provision for £7,500 towards 150 hours of staff time to oversee the work programme and monitoring contracts.
- 3.5 Grant funding would be paid on completion of work, via a claim submitted before the end of each of the two financial years covered by the Grant (2014/15 and 2015/16). The grant is flexible, allowing movement of the work elements between the financial years, with prior agreement from the Forestry Commission. There would be no penalty if works are not completed for any reason, although grant would not be paid for elements outstanding.
- 3.6 The grant conditions require formal Member approval of the project and acceptance of the funding, which must be spent by the end of March 2015 for year 1 and the end of March 2016 for year 2. The grant can only be spent on the specific outcomes set out in 3.9 and 3.10 below, as specified in the Forestry Commission contract.
- 3.7 The terms and conditions of the grant can be found in appendix B. It is worth noting that the work funded by the WIG must be maintained for at least five years from the date of each payment. For works enabling public access, the Council is required to ensure that the areas remain open to the general public, free of charge and accessible between dawn and dusk for a period of 30 years. However if in the unlikely event there was a transfer of ownership, these conditions could be transferred to a third party.
- 3.8 There are two strands to the WIG that have been applied for Woodland Access; and Woodland Biodiversity. The Woodland Access WIG aims to provide and improve facilities for free public access to woodlands where there is a need. The Woodland Biodiversity WIG aims to improve

woodland structure and health through careful thinning based on sound silviculture¹, for wildlife to thrive.

3.9 Woodland Access WIG:

| Woodland Access WIG items | 2014/15 (£) | 2015-16 (£) | TOTAL (£) |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 26 Interpretation boards (£1,200 each) | 31,200.00 | | 31,200.00 |
| 4 picnic benches with tables (£530 each) | 1,060.00 | 1,060.00 | 2,120.00 |
| 3 notice boards (£350 each) | 525.00 | 525.00 | 1,050.00 |
| 2 kissing gates (£380 each) | 760.00 | | 760.00 |
| 1033 m of footpath construction over 4 sites (£35 per meter) | 18,077.50 | 18,077.50 | 36,155.00 |
| 4 benches with back rests (£410 each) | 820.00 | 820.00 | 1,640.00 |
| 20 post and disk way-markers (£30 each) | 300.00 | 300.00 | 600.00 |
| 55 routed hardwood way-markers (£60 each) | 2,475.00 | 825.00 | 3,300.00 |
| Production of 1500 leaflets promoting woodlands (£500 per 500) | 1,500.00 | | 1,500.00 |
| Total cost of Work | 56,717.50 | 21,607.50 | 78,325.00 |
| WIG funding offered | 45,374.00 | 17,286.00 | 62,660.00 |
| LB Bromley's Contribution * | 11,343.50 | 4,321.50 | 15,665.00 |

3.10 Woodland Biodiversity WIG:

| Woodland Biodiversity WIG items | 2014/15 (£) | 2015-16 (£) | TOTAL (£) |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 14.3 hectares of woodland thinning work in 19 woodlands (£600 per hectare) | 8,580.00 | | 8,580.00 |
| 30 hectares of holly clearance in 3 woodlands (£800 per hectare) | 4,800.00 | 19,200.00 | 24,000.00 |
| 9.7 hectares of rhododendron and laurel control in 7 woodlands (£2,200 per hectare) | 17,072.00 | 4,268.00 | 21,340.00 |
| 9.7 hectares of rhododendron and laurel regrowth respray in 7 woodlands (£400 per hectare) | | 3,880.00 | 3,880.00 |
| 8.5 hectares of coppicing over 30 years old in 6 woodlands (£1,200 per hectare) | 2,040.00 | 8,160.00 | 10,200.00 |
| 1 ha of rhododendron and laurel control in 1 difficult site (£3,800 per hectare) | 3,800.00 | | 3,800.00 |
| 1 ha of rhododendron and laurel regrowth spray in a difficult site (£400 per hectare) | | 400.00 | 400.00 |
| 150 hours of forestry agent time – supervision of work (£50 per hour) | 3,750.00 | 3,750.00 | 7,500.00 |
| Total cost of Work | 40,042.00 | 39,658.00 | 79,700.00 |
| WIG funding offered | 32,033.60 | 31,726.40 | 63,760.00 |
| LB Bromley Contribution* | 8,008.40 | 7,931.60 | 15,940.00 |

¹ The art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health and quality of woodland vegetation to meet a full range of needs and values

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Environment Portfolio Plan 2013/16 includes the key aim “Conserve and enhance Bromley’s parks and green spaces”.
- 4.2 The maintenance, improvements and enhancements funded by this programme, including interpretation and access, are consistent with Bromley’s existing Countryside policies

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has been awarded a grant of £126,420 from the Forestry Commission to improve the access and biodiversity of 30 woodlands
- 5.2 The table below summarises the proposed costs of the improvements during 2014/15 and 2015/16

| | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | £ | £ | £ |
| Woodland Access WIG | 45,374.00 | 17,286.00 | 62,660.00 |
| Woodland Biodiversity WIG | 32,033.60 | 31,726.40 | 63,760.00 |
| Total capital grant | 77,407.60 | 49,012.40 | 126,420.00 |
| LB Bromley Contribution* | 19,351.90 | 12,253.10 | 31,605.00 |
| | 96,759.50 | 61,265.50 | 158,025.00 |

* Revenue budget and ‘in kind’ staff/volunteer time permitted as match funding

- 5.3 The grant conditions require formal Member approval of the project and acceptance of the funding, which must be spent by the end of March 2015 for year one and the end of March 2016 for year two. The grant can only be spent on the specific outcomes set out in 3.9 and 3.10 above, as specified in the Forestry Commission contract.
- 5.4 The Council is expected to provide match funding of £31,605. This will be met through a combination of an ‘in kind’ contribution from existing staff time and volunteer time (50%) and the use of the Parks Development budget (50%).
- 5.5 The terms and conditions also require that the work funded by the WIG must be maintained for at least five years from the date of each payment. For works enabling public access, the Council is required to ensure that the areas remain open to the general public, free of charge and accessible between dawn and dusk for a period of 30 years.
- 5.5 It is expected that there will be no additional revenue costs to the Council, as the land is currently maintained using existing budgets.
- 5.6 Officers will be responsible for ensuring that the works are carried out within the agreed timescales, that the grant conditions are adhered to, and that grant claims are submitted by the required deadlines.

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| Non-Applicable Sections: | Legal and Personnel Implications |
| Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer) | Appendix A - List of woodland sites to receive improvements as part of the two-year improvement programme Appendix B – Forestry Commission contract setting out terms and conditions |

APPENDIX A

- 1.Scadbury Park Nature Reserve - Chislehurst
2. Langley Nature Reserve – Kelsey & Eden Park
- 3.Walden Rec Wood - Chislehurst
- 4.Darrick Wood – Farnborough & Crofton
- 5.Covet Wood - Cray Valley West
- 6.Well Wood – Hayes & Coney Hall
- 7.Jubilee Country Park - Bickley
- 8.High Broom Wood – West Wickham
- 9.Padmal Wood – Bromley Common & Keston
- 10.Crofton Wood - Farnborough & Crofton
- 11.Elmfield Wood - Bromley Common & Keston
- 12.Elmstead Wood – Mottingham & Chislehurst North
- 13.Hayes Common - Hayes & Coney Hall
- 14.High Elms - Farnborough & Crofton
- 15.Marvels Wood - Mottingham & Chislehurst North
- 16.Great Thrift Wood – Petts Wood & Knoll
- 17.Kingswood Glen - Shortlands
- 18.Amhurst Wood – Cray Valley West
- 19.Foxbury Wood – Chelsfield & Pratts Bottom
- 20.Blyth Road Wood – Bromley Town
- 21.Milk Street Wood – Plaistow & Sundridge
- 22.Juggs Hill – Biggin Hill
- 23.St Pauls Green - Chislehurst
- 24.St Pauls Cray Hill Park – Cray Valley East
- 25.Bradmanshill Wood - Hayes & Coney Hall
- 26.Rushfield Shaw – Hayes & Coney Hall
- 27.Lillys Wood - Chelsfield & Pratts Bottom
28. Fox Hill Shaw – Hayes & Coney Hall
- 29.Cheyne Wood – West Wickham
- 30.Hobblingwell Wood – Cray Valley West