

# London Borough of Bromley

Report No.

ES20090

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Agenda  
Item No.

|                          |   |           |   |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|---|
| Title:                   | <b>GRANT FUNDING FROM THE FORESTRY COMMISSION TO SUPPORT THE WOODLAND IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME - POST COMPLETION REVIEW REPORT</b>                  |           |   |
| Decision Maker:          | <b>EXECUTIVE</b><br><b>For pre-decision scrutiny by:</b><br><b>Environment PDS Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021</b>                          |           | <b>Decision Date:</b><br><b>30<sup>th</sup> June 2021</b> |
| Decision Type:           | Non-Urgent  | Executive | Non-Key   |
| Budget/Policy Framework: | Within policy and budget  |           |   |
| Chief Officer:           | Colin Brand, Director of Environment and Public Protection  |           |   |
| Contact Officer:         | James Hilsden, Parks & Greenspaces Borough Manager & Neighbourhood Manager, Bromley West<br>Tel: 0208 3134632 Email: James.Hilsden@bromley.gov.uk |           |   |
| Ward:                    | Borough-wide  |           |   |

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 As part of the Capital Programme Procedures it is a requirement that schemes should be formally reviewed within one year of completion and the outcome of this review be brought to the Portfolio Holder for endorsement. This report provides a review of woodland improvements carried out between 2014-16 using funding secured from the Forestry Commission through a Woodland Improvement Grant and match-funding from the Council.
- 1.2 A total grant award of £126,420 was awarded by the Forestry Commission.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Environment Policy and Development Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report and provide the Executive with comments.

### The Executive are requested to:

- 2.2 Endorse the findings of the Post Completion Review that has been carried out in respect of the Woodland Improvement Grant scheme.

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) scheme provided capital investment in woodlands to create, enhance and sustain the social, environmental, and economic public benefits that woodlands provide. In March 2013 Bromley secured a £126,420 grant from the scheme. The grant was separated into two strands - Woodland Access (£62,660) which aimed to provide and improve facilities for free public access to woodlands where there is a need; and Woodland Biodiversity (£63,760) which aims to improve woodland structure and health through careful thinning based on sound silviculture, for wildlife to thrive.
- 3.2 The London Borough of Bromley is responsible for managing 552 hectares of woodland; 30 woodland sites throughout the borough were set to benefit from this grant, with approximately one half of these sites having an associated Friends Group attached to them. Where woodlands had an associated Friends Group, the work was delivered in partnership with volunteers and by engaging the local community. The allocation of both Council staffing costs and volunteer time towards this programme counted towards the match funding identified elsewhere in this report.
- 3.3 The award was based on a schedule of standard costs set by the Forestry Commission. A range of costs for operations and tasks were independently calculated based on typical scenarios, including materials, labour, and supervision costs. The WIG contribution rates were variable and ranged from a minimum of 50% to a maximum of 80% and were applied to these standard costs to set a grant rate for the work. The rate of grant for a work item was not negotiable.
- 3.4 Bromley's contribution to the grant works was £31,605; this was 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%). Expenditure came from the Woodlands Estate Works budget and the Nature Conservation Projects budget which existed at the time. Within the WIG grant there was also £7,500 of funding towards 150 hours of staff time to oversee the work programme and monitoring contracts.
- 3.5 The scheme was added to the Capital Programme with expenditure of £92,923 for 2014/15 and £50,385.50 for 2015/16 (see Table 1. below). As part of a contract novation the client element of parks management and grounds maintenance was outsourced to the incumbent service provider at that time, English Landscapes (now *idverde*) in 2015. Delivery of the scheme was then transferred to *idverde* for completion.

#### Expenditure – Table 1.

| <b><u>Woodland Access works</u></b> | <b>2014/15 (£)</b> | <b>2015-16 (£)</b> | <b>TOTAL (£)</b> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                     |                    |                    |                  |
| <b>WIG funding</b>                  | 30,654.40          | 9,404.40           | 40,058.80        |
| <b>LB Bromley Contribution</b>      | 11,343.50          | 4,321.50           | 15,665.00        |
| <b>Total cost of Work</b>           | <b>41,997.90</b>   | <b>13,725.90</b>   | <b>55,723.80</b> |

| <b><u>Biodiversity works</u></b> | <b>2014/15 (£)</b> | <b>2015-16 (£)</b> | <b>TOTAL (£)</b> |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                  |                    |                    |                  |
| <b>WIG funding</b>               | 42,916.70          | 28,728.00          | 71,644.70        |
| <b>LB Bromley Contribution</b>   | 8,008.40           | 7,931.60           | 15,940           |
| <b>Total cost of Work</b>        | <b>50,925.10</b>   | <b>36,659.60</b>   | <b>87,584.70</b> |

## Actual Expenditure

- 3.6 At completion of the project, £111,703.50 of works were undertaken that were identified from the original grant application. This sum of money was claimed and received from the Forestry Commission. In accordance with the terms and conditions of the Forestry Commission Grant Scheme (see Appendix A), there was no claim for overpayment of the amount and no balance was left remaining to repay.
- 3.7 As per usual grant funding practice, the grant had a series of terms and conditions and could only be spent on the outcomes as specified in the Forestry Commission contract. The work funded by the WIG needed to be maintained for at least five years from the date of each payment, and included 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.
- 3.8 Details of the type of works undertaken for the two strands (Woodland Access and Woodland Biodiversity) were in the form of the items covered in Appendix B.
- 3.9 The 30 woodland sites at which the Woodland Access and Biodiversity works were undertaken are listed with their respective Ward area in Appendix C.

## 4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Completion of the Woodlands Improvement Project scheme assisted in meeting the key outcomes of the Environment Portfolio Plan of 2013/16 which included the Key Aim to “Conserve and enhance Bromley’s parks and green spaces”.
- 4.2 The maintenance, improvements and enhancements funded by this programme, including interpretation and access, were consistent with Bromley’s existing countryside policies.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report provides information on a Post Completion Review that has been carried out in respect of the Woodlands Improvement Project. There are no financial implications arising from the matters addressed in this report.

## 6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The relevant Ward Members were consulted in the lead up to this project. The scheme received the support of the Environment Portfolio Holder and was presented to Members on 2nd April 2014.

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>                       | Personnel and Legal Implications |
| Background Documents:<br>(Access via Contact Officer) |                                  |

APPENDIX A

**Terms and Conditions of the Forestry Commission Grant Scheme (pdf document)**

## APPENDIX B

**Types of works undertaken for the two strands include the following:**

### **Woodland Access:**

- 26 Interpretation Boards
- 4 Picnic Benches with tables
- 3 Notice Boards
- 2 Kissing Gates
- 1033m of footpath construction over 4 sites
- 4 Benches with back rests
- 20 Post and disk way-markers
- 55 Routed hardwood way-markers
- Production of 1,500 leaflets promoting woodlands

### **Woodland Biodiversity:**

- 14.3 Hectares of woodland thinning work in 19 woodlands
- 30 Hectares of holly clearance in 3 woodlands
- 9.7 Hectares of rhododendron and laurel control in 7 woodlands
- 9.7 Hectares of rhododendron and laurel regrowth spray in 7 woodlands
- 8.5 Hectares of coppicing over 30 years old in 6 woodlands
- 1 Ha of rhododendron and laurel control in 1 difficult site
- 1 Ha of rhododendron and laurel regrowth spray in 1 difficult site
- 150 hours of forestry agent time – supervision of work

## APPENDIX C

### List of Woodland Sites/Ward:

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