

Decision Maker: ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SUSTAINABILITY, GREEN SERVICES & OPEN SPACES

FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY BY ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

Date: 21st June 2022

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Key

Title: ONE MILLION POUNDS PLATINUM JUBILEE PARKS FUND

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Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

To outline the proposed rules of engagement for applications to the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund, and to seek Environment Portfolio Holder approval for its adoption.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Environment and Community Services Performance Development and Scrutiny Committee to:

2.1. Note and provide comment upon the proposed rules of engagement to allocate funding for each round of the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund as set out in Appendix A of this report.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces to:

2.2. Approve the proposed rules of engagement for decision making on requests for funding from the Platinum Jubilee Parks Earmarked Reserve, based on the parameters and criteria set out in Appendix A to this report.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* incorporated a number of features to ensure that those who were not traditional users of Open Space were represented so as to ensure social cohesion and equality of opportunity, which the application criteria for the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund is asked to adopt.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. MBEB Priority: Childrens and Families, Adults and Older People, Safe, Clean and Green.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: £1m
 2. Ongoing costs: Subject to individual projects and any ongoing maintenance needs.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Parks and Green Spaces
 4. Total current budget for this head: £5.5m
 5. Source of funding: Earmarked reserve funded from underspends
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 0.5 FTE
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Applicable.
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: As a grants based process, this sits outside the usual framework of public procurement regulation but Officers must take the necessary advice from Legal to both establish a robust and transparent process, and put in place suitable agreements with grant awardees.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The Open Space Portfolio covers a range of sites and habitats including Parks, Open Spaces, Heathlands, Meadows and Woodlands. Accordingly these proposals, in conjunction with the delivery of the *Open Space Strategy* will impact upon all users of the borough's Open Spaces.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Whilst not asked directly for comments, a number of ward members have expressed interest in this scheme, along with identifying potential projects that they believe would be suitable for receipt of funding.

3. COMMENTARY

Background

- 3.1. The Covid-19 pandemic over the last two years has underlined the significant contribution that Bromley's open spaces make to the lives of both its residents and visitors. The Council recognises as the custodian of London's 'greenest' borough, that the increased use of and demand placed upon these open spaces has further highlighted the need to ensure that they are maintained to a high standard with a balanced provision of facilities.
- 3.2. The Environment and Community Services PDS Committee on 17th November 2021, adopted the Council's *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* (Committee Report ES20132) which sets out initiatives and associated action plans designed to facilitate improvements within the Portfolio as a whole.
- 3.3. Full Council on February 2022 (Committee Report CSD22023), approved the setting aside of £1m as a Platinum Jubilee Parks earmarked reserve, funded from underspends. Such funding will help to accelerate achievements within the *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* whilst also contributing towards the refurbishment and renewal of the Portfolio including (but not limited to):
- The improvement of areas of play and recreation including playgrounds, hard court play areas, gyms and surfacings.
 - The installation or improvement to parks infrastructure such as footways, embankments, waterbodies and signage
 - The conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and biodiversity within the portfolio's varied habitats.
 - The restoration of assets to support local community and grass roots sports groups.
- 3.4. To facilitate use of these funds, it is envisaged that local stakeholder groups such as Friends of Parks submit applications for community led projects to be allocated a sum of money from the scheme.

Rules of Engagement

- 3.5. As the Open Space Portfolio contains over 200 sites, there is the potential for there to be considerable competition for funding from this scheme, therefore the process for an application to be considered needs to be transparent. A proposed 'rules of engagement' to govern the scheme is included in full as Appendix A to this report, however key points to note are:
- a) The reserve will be used to support proposals from all over the borough.
 - b) Applicants will register on an application form to be published on the Council website when complete.
 - c) All project applications above the value of £3k shall be administered by a group or committee of at least 3 local residents and a representative of 1 Friends group (if they exist), with a supporting petition from 100 residents.
 - d) In order to assist with the management of the scheme there will be twice yearly application rounds with a deadline of the 1st April and 1st October of each year for individual projects valued above £3k, lasting until the fund has been spent.

- e) The Council will make a maximum contribution of £20k per projects, but applicants may submit projects of a larger value which will be supplemented by external grant funders.
 - f) Each electoral ward will receive a maximum of £40k from the fund.
 - g) Proposals should be thorough with a robust business case, incorporating good evidence of support from stakeholders based in the locality, evidence of a minimum of £500 donation from the community (£100 if the total being requested is below £3k), and with details of any relevant consent or permissions required.
 - h) Provision shall not be made for any maintenance costs that may result out of existing Council revenue budgets. Therefore where relevant as part of their total project costs, submissions must include either an indication of the maintenance for 20 years (where new assets are to be installed) or a difference in the maintenance cost for 20 years (where existing assets are to be updated or replaced).
 - i) Maintenance costs can be capitalised as either the amount requested from the Jubilee pot, or form part of any other additional funds secured, but must be clearly indicated on the application form.
 - j) The Council will disburse the funding and monitor the resulting project whilst the Council's service provide *idverde* will provide support and advice to a projects development.
- 3.6. It is expected that a proposal should align to one or more of the proposals described in 3.3 as well as aligning to the aims and objectives of the *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031*.
- 3.7. The proposal must be within a green space that is owned and maintained by the Council. This includes (but is not limited to) Parks, Open Spaces, Heathlands, Meadows, Woodlands, Cemeteries and Allotments.
- 3.8. All received proposals will be reviewed by the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management who will make approvals as to which are the most viable and beneficial to receive funding from the scheme as part of the twice yearly application round process. A fast-track process for applications shall be administered separately for projects below the value of £3k and shall also have regards to the proposed strategic aims and objectives.
- 3.9. The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management shall have delegated authority to approve funding for proposals following consultation with Council officers. The Environment and Community Services PDS Committee will receive a semi-annual report on the overall progress of all projects related to the scheme.
- 3.10. Where proposals require consent (e.g. planning permission) it will be the responsibility of the applicant to obtain this as required after the approval of funds is processed.
- 3.11. Once the terms of the scheme have been agreed the full details of the scheme along with guidance on how to apply will be circulated to all Councillors and key stakeholders. The scheme will be advertised to to the wider community via Council communication channels such as its website and social media.

4. SUSTAINABILITY/ IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- 4.1. *The Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* incorporated a number of sustainability features, which will be considered when assessing applications and determining whether it will contribute

towards protecting or enhancing the borough's diverse natural habitats, through processes such as nature friendly regime management or the natural regeneration of open space.

- 4.2. The *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* also wishes to improve educational provision within the Portfolio, so due weight will be given to proposals that would diversify learning opportunities such as to those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 4.3. An Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted as and when required for any project funded by the scheme, including those where the overall impact is a benefit. A template for an impact assessment will be made available where this is required.

5. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 5.1. The *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* incorporated a number of features to ensure that those who were not traditional users of Open Space were represented so as to ensure social cohesion and equality of opportunity.
- 5.2. Such features will be incorporated into the consideration for project applications and includes whether the proposal would have an impact on community mental and physical health (e.g. helping to combat social isolation) or help to cater for a wide range of needs (e.g. a diversification of playground equipment to be inclusive of those with physical disabilities and learning difficulties).
- 5.3. Applicants are also encouraged to bring forward projects that will help to tackle loneliness and meet the objective of the Council's *Tackling Loneliness Strategy 2022 to 2026*.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. As also mentioned in Sections 4 and 5 of this report part of the consideration of project applications criteria will be how well it meets the broader strategic objectives of the *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* including both the protection of biodiversity, cultural and historical assets and demonstrable benefits to community physical and mental health, community facilities and sporting provision.
- 6.2. Project applications should also endeavour to align to the objectives of '*Making Bromley Even Better*' including 'Children and Young People' and 'Adults and Older People' which refers to their ability to be able to thrive in an environment that they are proud to call home. They should also align to the objective 'Safe, Clean and Green' which refers to the Council's residents and businesses prospering in a safe, clean and green environment for both today and a sustainable future.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Awards approved under the scheme will be funded from the £1m earmarked reserve for the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund agreed by the Council on 22 February 2022.
- 7.2. This is a non-recurring budget and therefore an important element of the approval process will be identification of any ongoing maintenance liabilities of these schemes and ensuring that these are funded, either through making an allowance for a period of years from the Fund itself,

from other sources of funding secured by applicants, or whether these are already covered by existing Council maintenance budgets.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report requests the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee to note and comment upon the proposed rules of engagement to allocate funding for the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund and for the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces to approve this method of allocating the funds.
- 8.2 In February 2022, Full Council approved the creation of the £1 mn Platinum Jubilee Parks fund, noting that the utilisation of this fund is to be reported to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder with the agreement of the Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management Portfolio Holder. This is why this report now comes before the responsible Portfolio Holder for decision.
- 8.3 There is no statutory requirement to provide this grant funding but under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.
- 8.4 This report attaches the draft rules of engagement for making and considering applications for grant funding from the Platinum Jubilee Parks fund. In accordance with the ethical standards expected of Local Government, the process for applying and determining the award of grant funding must be clear, transparent and free from bias and/or any perception of bias.
- 8.5 Should members approve this report and the draft rules of engagement, officers are requested to seek legal advice on the application forms and any grant agreements that may be necessary.

9. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This report seeks to establish a grants distribution process for expenditure from the Platinum Jubilee Parks Earmarked Reserve.
- 9.2 As a grants based process, this sits outside the usual framework of public procurement regulation. Officers must take the necessary advice from Legal to establish a robust and transparent process, and put in place suitable agreements with grant awardees.

10. STRATEGIC PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Open spaces in the borough are managed and maintained by the Environment directorate, with buildings in parks managed and maintained by the property division within the Housing, Planning and Regeneration directorate. Management and maintenance of park infrastructure is split between these two directorates.
- 10.2. It is recommended that the property division are consulted on any proposed projects that have a direct impact on built assets or infrastructure so that advice can be given on any potential consequences impacting the council's ownership interest, and to identify any impact on or resulting maintenance liabilities.

10.3. As identified in this report, any new or additional maintenance liabilities arising as a result of a project must be identified in advance, and any additional funding required for these liabilities should be considered as part of the funding application. This is because the current maintenance budgets cannot absorb any new or additional maintenance liabilities created by these projects.

Non-Applicable Sections:	N/A
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	N/A