

Decision Maker: Environment & Community Services Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday 29 June 2023

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

Title: **PLATINUM JUBILEE PARKS FUND UPDATE**

Contact Officer: Jane Askew, Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund Project Officer
Tel: 0208 461 7717 E-mail: Jane.Askew@bromley.gov.uk

David Braybrook, Strategic Commissioning Officer
Tel: 0208 313 4440 E-mail: David.Braybrook@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Director of Environment and Public Protection

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for decision/report and options

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the delivery of the £1m Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund following its launch in July 2022.
- 1.2 This report also confirms that the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services & Open Spaces is responsible for deciding applications made to the Fund from April 2023.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Environment & Community Services PDS Committee are asked to note the progress made on the delivery of the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund during the first year of implementation, including the change in decision-maker.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The application criteria for the Fund includes project alignment with the objectives of the Council's *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* which includes promoting inclusion. Projects approved in the first year includes those that will directly benefit children, such as playground improvements.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority

(4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: £1m
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost,
 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*): 1 (0.6 FTE)
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: The process to disseminate the Jubilee Parks Fund sits outside of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: The property division is to be consulted on any proposed projects where there is to be any impact on Council owned built assets.
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: Applications to the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund need to adhere to the *Open Space Strategy 2021-2031* which supports the ambitions of the *Council's Net Zero Carbon Action Plan*.
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Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: Applications received from this fund have contributed towards Strategic Objective 4 (Local Economy) of the Council's *Open Space Strategy 2021-2031* by enhancing the amenity, leisure and recreation provision of the Open Space portfolio through the participation of the local community.

Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: A number of applications have contributed towards Strategic Objective 3 (Health, Wellbeing and community) of the Council's *Open Space Strategy 2021-2031* through initiatives to improve both the physical and mental health of local communities.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (*current and projected*): Currently applications have been received from most wards across the borough, indicating that the improvement brought about by the fund will impact upon most users of the borough's open spaces. It is projected that the remaining areas will also impact upon users of the green spaces in those areas, as they will be targeted and encouraged to apply to the fund to bring about change to their open spaces.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: It should be noted that ward members have supported applications to the Fund, and their views are requested on specific applications for reasons including where their express support is not submitted as part of the application process or where a ward may be oversubscribed.

3. COMMENTARY

Background

- 3.1 In February 2022, Full Council approved the budget which included setting aside £1m in a Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund, funded from underspends (**CSD22023**). The funding was intended to accelerate achievement of the objectives in the *Open Space Strategy 2021-2031* whilst also contributing towards the renewal of assets in parks and open spaces, including (but not limited to):
- The improvement of areas of play and recreation including playgrounds, hard court play areas, green gyms and surfacing.
 - 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 approved habitats.
 - The restoration of assets to support local community and grass root sports groups.
- 3.2 In June 2022, the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces approved the approach to be taken to allocating spend from this fund (**ES20189**), agreeing rules of engagement that allow local stakeholder groups (such as Park Friends, Resident Association and Allotment Associations) to submit applications for community led projects. This approach allows communities to apply for and direct investment in parks and open spaces in the projects that most matter to them.
- 3.3 At their meeting in March 2023, the Environment & Community Services PDS requested an update on the delivery of this fund.

Update

- 3.4 To provide resource to administer and project manage the delivery of this fund, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning & Contract Management agreed, with support from the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services & Open Spaces, to the creation of the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund Project Officer post at 0.6FTE for a fixed term of 2 years.
- 3.5 The Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund was made open to applications on 18th July 2022, with biannual deadlines for applications over £3k in October and April whilst applications under £3k can be submitted at any time. Owing to the death of the late Queen Elizabeth II, the deadline for the October 2022 round was extended by one month.
- 3.6 Following two rounds of applications (November 2022 and April 2023), 40 applications have been received; 29 were received in the November application round, and 11 were received in April. 29 of these applications have been approved at a cumulative value of 409k and are in the delivery phase or have been given an estimated delivery date. It is anticipated that 17 of these projects will be fully delivered by December 2023. Four applications have been rejected (because they don't comply with the rules for the Fund, the applicant already has an active application, or the ward is oversubscribed), and a further three applications are being developed with the applicant before being put forward for a decision. At the time of writing this report, a further four applications have been submitted to the Portfolio Holder for a decision.

- 3.7 **Appendix 1** sets out the applications that have been received and their status, including the value of the applications. There have been a good range of project type applied for under both application rounds, which have included:
- Playground improvements at Petts Wood Recreation Ground, Kings Meadow, Betts Park, Whitehall Recreation Ground, Chislehurst Recreation Ground, Penge Recreation Ground, Cudham Recreation Ground and Queensmead Recreation Ground.
 - Establishment of community orchards at Richmal Crompton Fields and Jubilee Country Park, and a community garden at Kelsey Park.
 - Pond improvement/restoration works at Scadbury Park and Priory Gardens, and wetland creation at Riverside Gardens.
 - Enhancements or improvements to sports facilities at Willet Recreation Ground and Coney Hall Recreation Ground, and a dog agility course at Cator Park.
 - Infrastructure or landscape improvements at Alexandra Recreation Ground, South Hill Woods, Beckenham Green and Kingswood Glen.
- 3.8 There has been good interest in the fund from most wards. It is worth noting that funds have been fully allocated in Darwin, Hayes & Coney Hall, Kelsey & Eden Park, Penge & Cator, Petts Wood & Knoll and Shortlands & Park Langley, and mostly allocated in Chislehurst. Although not yet decided at the time of drafting this report, the funding for St Paul's Cray is also oversubscribed. There have not yet been any applications from Biggin Hill, Bromley Town, Chelsfield or Mottingham wards, therefore officers and idverde community managers are carrying out engagement works to encourage and support groups with applications for these wards. Further information on funding by ward is set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.9 It should be noted that following submission of an application, officers work with idverde, and where necessary other divisions within the Council, to fully scope proposals to determine and plan for their deliverability, and this can take some time depending on the responsiveness of the applicant or the complexity of the proposal. Officers aim to inform applicants whether their application can be recommended, requires further scoping, or is not suitable within a month of the deadline for submissions, but scoping can take longer depending on the level of additional work needed to ensure deliverability.

Rules of Engagement

- 3.10 The rules of engagement remain primarily the same, with guidance documents and an application checklist available online at www.bromley.gov.uk/jubileeparksfund. idverde community managers and the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund Project Officer are also available to provide guidance to applicants.
- 3.11 The expectation is that, in most instances, the Council will hold and spend grant monies to deliver the applied for projects in close liaison with the applicant (as the stakeholder representatives). The grant agreement sets out how this will work in practice. There are a small number of instances where monies are transferred to and held by the applicant; this is determined depending on the circumstances of the individual application.
- 3.12 The key change to the rules of engagement is that, through appropriate internal processes, the delegated authority to decide applications has been transferred from the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces as of April 2023. Approval of this change was recorded by Democratic Services.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 The *Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* aims to ensure that those who were not traditional users of Open Space were represented to ensure social cohesion and equality of opportunity.
- 4.2 This aim has been reflected in the criteria for applications including 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).
- 4.3 Applicants have been encouraged to bring forward projects that will help to tackle loneliness and meet the objective of the Council's *Tackling Loneliness Strategy 2022 - 2026*.
- 4.4 A wide range of applications were received which incorporated playground improvements to benefit young children, and adults through using the open space and socialising with other parents/carers. Many applicants have also considered the needs of disadvantaged groups e.g. those with disabilities and learning difficulties through the use of inclusive play equipment within their proposals. Applications were also received for various trails and community garden projects, focussing on getting individuals outside and involved in activities which will benefit their physical and mental health.

5. TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Fund supports the aims of the Council's Corporate Strategy: Making Bromley Even Better, contributing specifically to ambition 4: For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future. As is set out in section 4 of this report, the projects being funded will also support ambition 1: For children and young people to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances un families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home, and ambition 2: For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
- 5.2 The Fund is also aligned to the delivery of the Council's *Open Space Strategy 2021- 2031*, as set out in paragraph 4.2.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Projects agreed under the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund are funded from the £1m earmarked reserve agreed by the Council on 22nd February 2022.
- 6.2 The table below shows that the total amount of funding applied for is £556k, but that the amount awarded is currently £409k.

	£,000
Total amount applied for to date	550
Total amount awarded to date	409
Total amount rejected to date	37
Total amount awaiting decision	104

- 6.3 The Fund has also been used to create the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund Project Officer post at 0.6FTE for a fixed term of 2 years at an estimated cost of £60k.

- 6.4 As this is a non-recurring budget, an important element of the approval process is the identification of ongoing maintenance liabilities and ensuring these are funded. Projects awarded funds from the scheme have been scrutinized at the application and approval stages to ensure they include any ongoing maintenance costs or that the costs can be covered by another source.
- 6.5 Following scoping and quoting, projects exceeding their original estimated budget are asked to scale back their proposals to ensure that the project can be delivered to the allocated budget. On some occasions projects are able to be value engineered in-house to ensure that the project can be delivered to the approved grant value.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report requests the Environment & Community Services PDS Committee to note the progress made on the delivery of the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund during the first year of implementation, including the change in decision-maker.
- 7.2 The Council's Constitution, at Part 4 – Rules of Procedure, provides the terms of reference for the Environment & Community Services PDS Committee as it relates to that Portfolio. Under these terms of reference, this Committee is responsible for receiving reports and making recommendations on performance monitoring of services and activities falling within the remit of this portfolio.
- 7.3 Legal Services were instructed to provide template grant agreements and can assist further where officers feel this is required.

8. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report refers to a grants application process set up to disseminate the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund. This process sits outside of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. In accordance with CPR 2.1.2, Officers must take all necessary professional advice.

9. PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 Any new or additional maintenance liabilities arising as a result of a project are identified in advance, and any additional funding required for these liabilities are 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.

10. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 *The Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* incorporated a number of sustainability features, which are 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, thus supporting the ambitions of the *Council’s Net Zero Carbon Action Plan*. A recent project that has been approved and has addressed these points is the creation of a sensory garden and an orchard to commemorate the late HM Queen Elizabeth II at Richmal Crompton Fields in Bromley Common & Holwood. The proposal will encourage biodiversity by allowing wildlife to feed on the fruit, pollen and deadwood of the orchard. The sensory garden will also contain selective and scented planting to encourage various pollinators. It is intended that fruit from the site will be donated to the community to promote healthy eating habits.
- 10.2 A number of applications were received which will benefit the borough’s diverse habitats. Community orchards, community gardens, meadows, stumpy gardens and restoring pond and wetland habitat have all featured in applications thus far.
- 10.3 *The Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031* also wishes to improve educational provision within the Portfolio, so due weight is given to proposals that diversify learning opportunities such as to those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. For example, the recreation of a wetland habitat in Riverside Gardens, St Mary Cray offers the opportunity to engage the local community and local schools in volunteer days through activities such as data collection.

11. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- 11.1 Applications received from this fund have contributed towards Strategic Objective 4 (Local Economy) of the Council’s *Open Space Strategy 2021-2031* such as those to improve playground and/or sporting facilities will help to enhance the amenity, leisure and recreation provision of the Open Space portfolio through the participation of the local community.
- 11.2 Through these interventions the Council’s Open Spaces better support the needs of the local communities and in turn provide a boost to the local economy as people spend more time and money in their local areas.

11. IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 12.1 A number of applications have contributed towards Strategic Objective 3 (Health, Wellbeing and Community) of the *Open Space Strategy 2021-2031* either through encouraging physical activity in a way that is accessible and open to those who may not wish to take part in organised sports (such as trim trails), or through initiatives to facilitate social networking through creation of groups with a shared purposes or interest such as a community gardening club.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Personnel Implications, Ward Councillor Views
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	ES20189 One Million Pounds Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund