

Decision Maker: ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 12 June 2024

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

Title: PLATINUM JUBILEE PARKS FUND UPDATE

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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. A previous update was also provided in June 2023 (**ES20276**).

1.2 This report also provides an update on the delegated authority to determine the outcome of applications, which was transferred to the Portfolio Holder for Environment in December 2023, due to a new appointment.

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 second 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: £758k
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Parks and Green Spaces
 4. Total current budget for this head: £7.4m
 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 the 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.
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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*): Applications have been received from all wards across the borough, indicating that the improvement brought about by the fund will positively impact most users of the borough's open spaces. The remaining areas which have not yet received their full ward allocation 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 As part of the budget setting process for 2022/23, in February 2022, Full Council approved the allocation of £1m to a Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund. Funded from underspends (**CSD22023**); the Fund is intended to support the objectives of the Open Space Strategy.
- 3.2 The approach to allocating spend was agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces in June 2022 which allowed local stakeholders groups (such as Park Friends, Resident Associations and Allotment Associations) to submit applications for community led projects, directing investment in parks and open spaces (**ES20189**). This set an allocation of £40k for each of the 22 wards (£880k in total). 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 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.
- 3.4 The Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund opened for applications on 18th July 2022, with biannual deadlines for applications over £3k in October and April each year, whilst applications under £3k can be submitted at any time.
- 3.5 At their meeting in March 2023, the Environment & Community Services PDS requested an annual update on the delivery of this fund.
- 3.6 In June 2023 (**ES20287**), the Environment & Community Services Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee were provided with a detailed update on the delivery of the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund in its first year following its launch in July 2022.
- 3.7 In July 2023, (**ES20286**) Executive resolved to approve a variation to the idverde contract of up to £880k to support the delivery of the projects developed under the fund, utilising idverde's existing supply chain to demonstrate value for money. Delegated authority was also given to the

Assistant Director of Environment (Carbon Management and Greenspace) to agree project specific variations as they arrive.

Delivery Update: Year 2

3.8 Following four rounds of applications since the fund opened (November 2022, April 2023, October 2023 and April 2024), 59 applications have been received:

Round	Number of applications
November 2022	29
April 2023	11
October 2023	12
April 2024	7
TOTAL	59

52 of these applications have been approved at a cumulative value of £758k. Seven applications have been rejected (because either they do not comply with the rules for the Fund, or the applicant already had an active application, or the applicant withdrew their application, or the ward was oversubscribed.)

3.9 27 of the approved applications are projects that have been fully delivered, with a further 25 projects programmed for delivery by March 2025, however this is subject to some external factors such as community groups securing any additional funds that were identified as part of their bid.

3.10 **Appendix 1** sets out the applications that have been received and their status, including the value of the applications. There has been a good range of project type applied for under all application rounds, some of the applications received since the last update report have included:

- Playground improvements at Farnborough Village Inn Recreation Ground, Palace Square, Goddington Park, McAndrews Recreation Ground, Mottingham Sports Ground, Belmont Open Space, Norman Park and Churchfields Recreation Ground.
- Enhancements or improvements to sports facilities at Bromley Skate Park in Church House Gardens, Farnborough Tennis Club, Chelsfield Cricket Club and the MUGA at Churchfields Recreation Ground.
- Biodiversity improvements to Bromley Palace Park along with a walking trail linking the green spaces within the Bromley Town ward.
- Outdoor gym equipment at Biggin Hill Recreation Ground to improve health and wellbeing.
- Access improvements to green spaces through the installation/reinstatement of pathways at Mottingham Sports Ground and Darrick & Newstead Wood.

3.11 There has been good interest in the fund from all wards. It is worth noting that funds have been fully allocated in all wards except for Beckenham Town & Copers Cope, Bickley & Sundridge, Biggin Hill, Chelsfield, Plaistow and St Mary Cray. Officers and idverde Community Managers

are carrying out engagement to encourage and support groups with applications for these wards. Further information on funding by ward is set out in **Appendix 2**, and **Appendix 3** details case studies of some of the completed projects.

Rules of Engagement

3.12 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 and support to applicants.

3.13 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.

3.14 The key change to the rules of engagement in year 2 is that, the delegated authority to decide applications was transferred to the newly appointed Portfolio Holder for Environment as of December 2023. For any applications where a conflict of interest was declared, through appropriate internal processes, the delegated authority to decide applications was transferred to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management.

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 £833,288k, but that the amount awarded is currently £757,977k.

Total amount applied for to date	£833,288
Total amount awarded to date	£757,977
Total amount rejected to date	£75,291

- 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 scrutinised 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 second year of implementation, including an update to the 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 that has addressed these points is the Bromley Palace Park project which aims to enhance the biodiversity of the site. A persimmon tree and a range of leafy and flowering plants will be planted around the historical listed features within the site, improving biodiversity as well as making the features more attractive.
- 10.2 A number of applications were received which will benefit the borough's diverse habitats. Community orchards, community gardens, meadows, stumpery 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, a community allotment project at Southlands Road Allotments will be a platform to share lessons on environmentally friendly gardening and planting techniques as well as providing advice and guidance to the wider public on strengthening biodiversity. The applicant received a small award towards this project to purchase tools, seeds and equipment.

12. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- 12.1 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 economy.

13. IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 13.1 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 purpose or interest such as community gardening club.

14. CUSTOMER IMPACT

- 14.1 Officers and *idverde* have received positive feedback from both the applicants to the fund as well as the communities that their projects have impacted. The projects have improved many of the parks and open spaces within the borough for residents to enjoy. It is hoped that each ward will receive its full ward allocation to further improve spaces for Bromley residents.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Personnel Implication, Ward Councillor Views
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	ES20189 – One Million Pounds Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund ES20276 – Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund Update ES20287 – Variations to the Contract for Parks Management and Ground Maintenance