

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: Environmental Services PDS Committee

Date: 1st March 2011

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

Title: FRIENDS ANNUAL REPORT

Contact Officer: Louise Simpson, Development and Partnerships Manager, Streetscene & Greenspace
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Chief Officer: Nigel Davies, Director of Environmental Services

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

This report updates Members on the work carried out by the Streetscene and Greenspace Division working in partnership with the Friends (volunteers) of the Borough. The document provides a summary of the progress made over the past twelve months.

The Friends Annual Review 2010/11, can be viewed in the Members' Room or obtained via the Landscape Helpdesk 020 8313 4771 or landscape.helpdesk@bromley.gov.uk. The document entitled: Friends Annual Review 2010/11 is also on the One Bromley Web page.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Receive the annual report and note another successful year for the Borough's Friends.
- 2.2 Formally record the PDS and Portfolio Holder's thanks to the staff and volunteers for their significant and valuable contribution.
- 2.3 To note that £281,860 was secured for green space improvements by the Friends of Parks and Greenspaces through external funding opportunities during 2010/11.
- 2.4 To note the success of the new initiatives under the heading Healthy Lifestyles; projects that reinforce the health programme delivered by Parks and Greenspace section.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy. Bromley 2020 Vision, Building a Better Bromley; Environment Portfolio Plan
 2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment. Contributes to other BBB priorities
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost 2010/11 £27,610 from Parks & Greenspace (P&GS). £30,000 from Street Services (SS).
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring cost. Currently funded for 2010/11 - subject to review
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Streetscene and Greenspace, SS and P&GS.
 4. Total current budget for this head: £27,610 P&GS
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget plus additional project funding delivered through external funding opportunities
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): Partnership Officers: 3 FTE Healthy Lifestyles Officers. 1 FTE Grants Officer. 1 FTE Street Services Officer. Also the invaluable support of the Park Services, Crystal Palace Park Rangers, Grounds Maintenance, Arboriculture, Infrastructure teams, assisted by colleagues from the Countryside Service and Street Services Section.
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 150 hours per week dedicated staff plus full support from the whole of the Parks & Greenspace Section, Countryside Service and Street Services officers which included evening and weekend cover.
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-statutory - Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable.
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Customer Impact

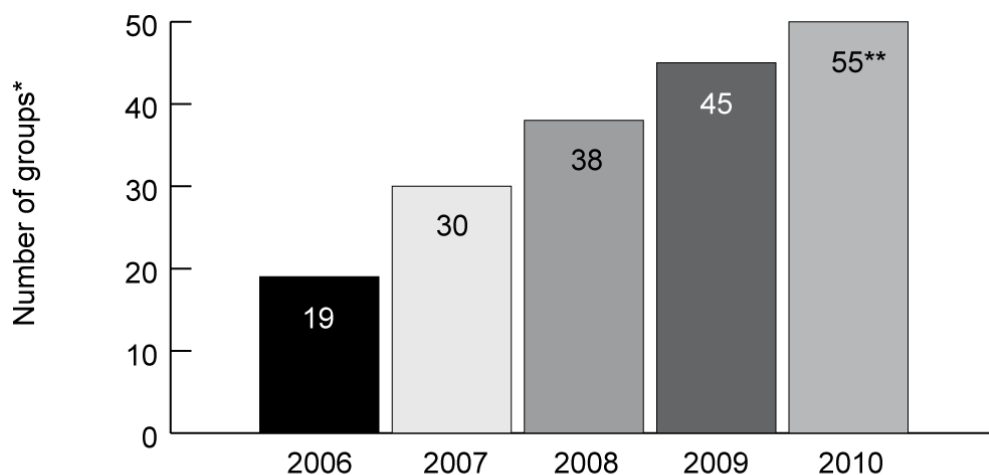
1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All Bromley residents
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: n/a

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 Friends volunteers are local people who work alone or as part of a group to improve their environment, helping to make Bromley a better place in which to live. The selfless work of these individuals has ensured our parks, streets, woodlands and countryside sites are safer, cleaner and greener. The work of Friends inspires civic pride and 'Builds Communities' enabling local people to take an active role in making their local environment thrive. The ethos of 'Big Society' has been embedded in Bromley for over 20 years.



*Friends of parks and green spaces

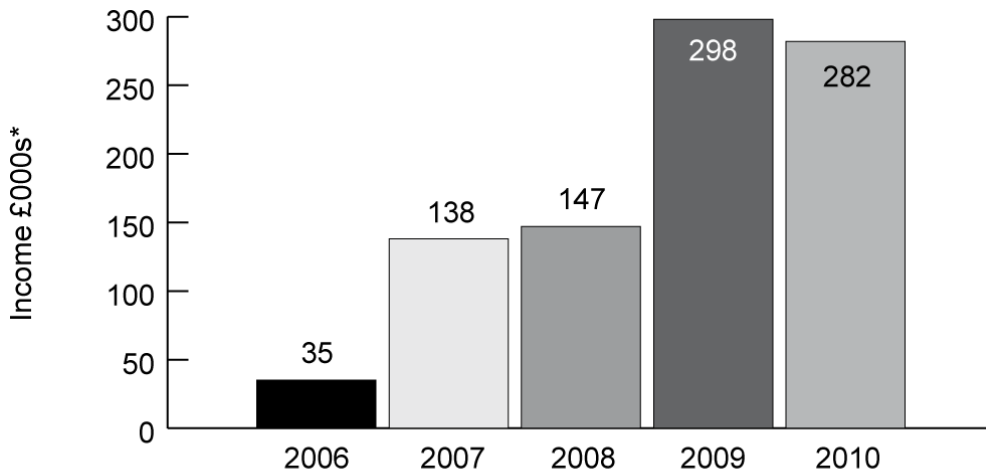
**Includes expression of interest from people wishing to form groups

3.2 By volunteering, our Friends receive advice, support, training, supervision, and tools, with many officers, across all disciplines, giving up their own personal time to help Friends deliver at weekends. Tasks are many and include picking up litter, removing graffiti, clearing snow, coppicing woods, surveying wildlife, providing play equipment and delivering park concerts and community events.

3.3 The last twelve months has produced another successful year for the Streetscene and Greenspace volunteers. The partnership between officers and the thousands of Friends, has enabled expansion in range and diversity of projects.

Additional funding

3.4 The symbiotic partnership between Streetscene and Greenspace and its residents has secured an additional £265,860 of which our parks and other public spaces have been the beneficiaries. This figure is made up of grants, sponsorship, sales, events and subscriptions. Grant secured this year has been promoted to our wider partners to include grassroots sports providers and allotment associations. Examples of projects delivered through this additional funding include a £50,000 sensory garden in Biggin Hill Recreation Ground, funding to create new allotments / community growing areas in the Crays, playground equipment at Hollydale Open Space, a history trail at Darrick and Newstead Woods, a soccer school for Elmstead Football Club, a new kitchen for Queensmead Bowls pavilion, and toilets installed at Roslyn Way and Hook Farm Allotments.

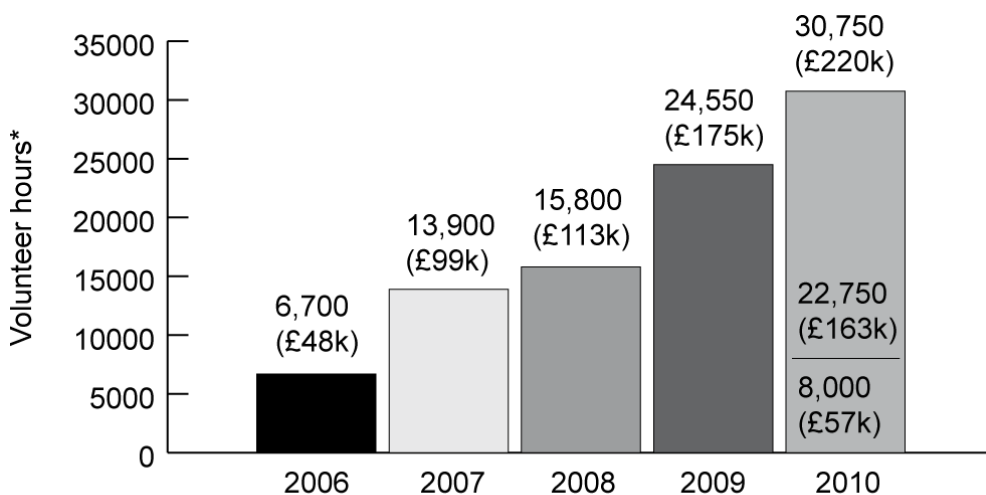


*Friends of parks and green spaces

3.5 Another £245,040, of which £119,130 has been paid through Bromley’s accounts and £125,910 through Friends accounts, has been delivered via officers who work tirelessly to source external funding opportunities for the benefit of our community partners, bringing the total of additional investment to £510,900. The detail of some of this additional funding is described in more detail below.

Volunteer hours

3.6 The Friends do not only generate income. They continue to increase their invaluable contribution by providing man hours to preserve, conserve, and deliver maintenance and horticultural tasks. Over half of Bromley’s parks and greenspaces, (as several groups oversee more than one site), now benefit from having Friends as custodians.



*Friends of parks and green spaces

3.7 The number of work hours the Friends of Parks have gifted is 22,750 hours which equates to £163,000. An extra 8,000 hours which equates to £57,150 were delivered by the participants of the *Park Time* and *Grow Time* initiatives, with numerous additional hours contributed by Street Friends. These Street Friends volunteers act as the Council’s “eyes and ears” by reporting problems and supporting officers. Street Friends have also been equipped with graffiti removal kits, litter pickers, and purple rubbish sacks with a dedicated telephone hotline to the Council’s street cleansing contractor who will collect rubbish sacks following litter picking events.

3.8 Friends joined the annual *Big Bromley Brushup*, now becoming a regular campaign during August, involving eleven days of activities featuring events such as litter picking and graffiti clearance, supported by officers and contractors.

- 3.9 The Future Jobs Fund staff have been an asset to the delivery of the Friends partnership, together with two volunteers who work with Park Services – one is a professional carpenter who creates bird boxes, notice boards, mends fences and benches for Friends sites; the other helps to alleviate the anti-social problems surrounding parks

Sponsorship

- 3.10 The Friends are also aided by our contractor partners, and various charities. *Give2give*, based in Bromley, has become the official sponsor of the Friends *People for Parks Awards*, and are generously donating a second mini-bus. ACH Landscapes provide many hours of assistance to many of our initiatives and schemes, including practical horticulture training sessions for Friends, at nil cost to the council.
- 3.11 Friends Groups have also individually worked with local businesses to raise sponsorship. The Friends of Cator Park and Alexandra Recreation Ground, hold regular raffles with prizes donated by local shops, and the Friends of Kelsey advertise local businesses in their newsletter to offset printing costs. The Friends Forum has also attracted sponsorship from the Churchill Theatre, which regularly provides Gala evenings to increase the Forum income.
- 3.12 The Friends have proved time and again to be best placed to develop meaningful relationships with residents, schools, churches and other organisations. *Outdoor Bromley*, Environmental Services parks event held at Queens Gardens in September, demonstrated this by attracting many stall holders from organisations such as the scouts, and Neighbourhood Watch. *Cray Day*, organised by the Friends of Cray Valley, attracted over 4,000 people to their park, and was paid for by local business.

Maintenance

- 3.13 This year the joint annual Friends *Be a responsible Dog Owner* weekend was also supported by the Street Friends. Overseen by Park Services, and supported by Ward Security, a caravan and display was set up in Bromley Town Centre. The Friends also championed their own parks by putting up posters, talking to dog walkers, and picking up dog mess. Over 80,000 dog hygiene bags were given out over the weekend.
- 3.14 In 2010, Park Services supported the Friends activities by providing 324 man hours to remove graffiti, and 3170 man hours for maintenance and repairs. They also delivered equipment, including specialist tools to 128 Friends events.
- 3.15 The Grounds Maintenance team provided allotment sites with 426 Hawthorn, 805 pyracantha and 250 holly plants for the plot holders to plant against boundary walls, to deter site break ins and vandalism. To help alleviate the shortage of allotment sites within Bromley, 28 half plots were reclaimed at Farnborough Hill Allotment site.
- 3.16 The Friends benefited from £17,500 secured for new trees in parks and woodlands thanks to the Divisions's Arboriculture team.
- 3.17 All of the Parks and Greenspace teams are working with Friends Groups to create management plans this year to enable strategies to develop in which to attract additional external funding.

Working with Young People

- 3.18 The Bromley Youth Advisory Panel secured £3,000 to deliver a number of training sessions for youth provision, including the *Junior River Keeper* and *Young Advisor* schemes.
- 3.19 Funding was secured to deliver a voucher based youth diversionary scheme programme encouraging 10-12 year olds to become part of their community by delivering gardening projects to improve their local area. Each active participant was rewarded by a £5 voucher. Following the

success of this scheme, which was celebrated by local ward members at an awards presentation, additional funding has been secured through Affinity Sutton and a Grassroots grant delivered by the Youth Advisory Panel, to continue this work.

- 3.20 St Mary's Primary School secured a grant to deliver a community garden within their school grounds. Grow Time worked side-by-side with the pupils, parents and teachers to deliver this project.
- 3.21 The Friends of High Broom Woods are working in partnership with St David's School and Oak Lodge School to improve their site. Funding has been secured to train the teachers in woodland management enabling existing classroom activities to take place within a woodland setting.
- 3.22 Cator and Alex, High Broom, Hollydale, and Mottingham Friends, to name a few, worked with their neighbouring schools this year, on various projects such as creating new park signage.

Healthy Lifestyles

- 3.23 Being close to nature is universally recognised as an excellent remedy to improve physical and mental well-being, and parks provide an ideal canvas. Therefore *Healthy Lifestyles* work is fast becoming a natural expansion to the Parks and Greenspace portfolio. Many of Bromley's existing Friends comment on improvement to their personal wellbeing, when they work with the Parks and Greenspace officers. They receive gentle exercise, make friends and know they are making a positive contribution to their local community, which boosts self confidence.
- 3.24 Depression and other debilitating illnesses are becoming more and more common. Within society, people are becoming isolated from neighbours and family members, and many are limited by the amount of physical activity they do. By working side-by-side with officers, not only does an individual's personal esteem and health improve, but Bromley's parks and woodland sites improve too with the activities the client delivers.
- 3.25 Working in partnership with the local PCT, Bromley has secured £30,000 (£3,300 spent in 2009/10 and £26,700 in 2010/11) to deliver two successful projects, *Grow Time* and *Park Time*, which is being piloted in the Crays (see appdx). Up to 20 people from the local community, who suffer with a range of illnesses, including depression, stroke and Gulf War Syndrome, are the beneficiaries. *Grow Time* clients are being taught how to improve their health by positive activities designed around nature, gentle exercise, and food production. Based at Poverest allotments, they have upgraded the allotment site, and now are utilising their newly developed skills by teaching the wider community, including schools, how to successfully manage a community growing area.
- 3.26 *Park Time* is a conservation session where people can improve their fitness by working on selected park projects. They often work alongside Friends groups, and work days have included river clearance, tree crown rising, and removing vegetation from overgrown paths. Both groups are formally constituted and have been embraced under the Friends Forum umbrella.
- 3.27 The intention is to deliver this programme, eventually, across the whole of Bromley. We are already seeking additional funding from the PCT to deliver a similar scheme in the Mottingham area.
- 3.28 With the support of Capital Shopping Centres (Glades), Bromley and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) these projects will be expanded in July 2011 to enable Penge residents to benefit from a *Green Gym* programme of activities. A new group of *Grow Time* and *Park Time* clients will be based at Winsford Gardens, who will oversee the horticulture, and maintenance of the site. By utilising part of the neighbouring allotment site, there is also the

opportunity to grow additional plants and shrubs, to be used to improve the horticultural stock in Winsford Gardens and other Penge sites.

- 3.29 Walking is another major component which will improve the health of Bromley residents. Officers and volunteers have signed up to *Walking for Health*, a national initiative, supported by Natural England that encourages more people to become physically active in their local area. It is the largest network of health walk schemes across England, offering regular short walks over easy terrain with trained walk leaders. The Parks Partnership Team has collaborated with Bromley PCT to introduce the scheme across the Borough.

Conferences, Awards and Promotion of Service

- 3.30 The Friends Winter Bash delivered a series of lectures on park history, and the People for Parks awards attracted sponsorship to deliver the event.
- 3.31 The Development & Partnerships Manager was invited to lecture at the world first *Healthy Parks Healthy People* conference in Melbourne, Australia. The second is being staged in London during the Olympic Games.
- 3.32 The first joint Streetscene and Greenspace Friends conference was delivered to volunteers across the Borough highlighting new initiatives and opportunities. Over 1000 residents signed up to become Snow Friends working with Bromley to clear snow and ice during the winter period. A first for Bromley in terms of community engagement during the recent extreme weather conditions.
- 3.33 In October, the Parks and Greenspace Section was invited to host a conference at City Hall to highlight Bromley's success and experience of working with the volunteer sector. The *Better through Community Action* seminar was supported by pan London Councillors and Heads of Service and the event was sponsored by the Landscape Group, Ward Security and Gristwood & Toms, the parks' contractors.
- 3.34 Bromley was recognised for its tree and woodland excellence at the London Tree and Woodlands Awards 2010, winning a total of 3 out of the 7 awards:-
- *Excellence in Tree and Woodland work by a public body* – Parks & Greenspace Arb Team
 - *The most successful woodland project by a community group* – Friends of High Broom Wood supported by Pherenice Worsley Buck, Parks Partnership officer
 - *The London Tree and Woodland Photographic Award* – Mark Lee, Friends volunteer
- 3.35 Led by the Grounds Maintenance Team and supported by Street Services, Bromley received a silver award in the Urban Community Category, London in Bloom Campaign, working in partnership with the Petts Wood Friends of Parks and Streets.
- 3.36 Park Services and the Crystal Palace Park Rangers were joint-winners of London Borough of Bromley's Top Team Award 2010. They also were awarded with a Highly Commended certificate at the 2010 Annual Safer Bromley Partnership Awards.
- 3.37 The Borough was re-accredited with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard demonstrating excellent standards of woodland management for three years in a row
- 3.38 Two Street Friend volunteers were awarded an NVQ Level 2 in Cleaning and Support Service.

Moving Forward

- 3.39 The role of the Council and its staff is to support, encourage and facilitate the aspirations of individuals and groups allowing them to prosper and grow, enabling them to do what they do

best – engaging local people, instilling pride in their local environment and working with the Council to improve its landscape portfolio.

- 3.40 As the change driven by the Coalition Governments Comprehensive Spending Review works through, officers will have to focus on strengthening their already excellent relationships with groups, businesses and other organisations.
- 3.41 If the work of the volunteers is to survive and thrive in these challenging times, it must continue to receive the unconditional support, both politically and financially, of Members, the PDS Committee and the Portfolio Holder.
- 3.42 A more detailed report from each team is available as appendices in the full report which is available via [http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx? CId=127&MId=3382&Ver=4](http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=127&MId=3382&Ver=4) or on request from the Landscape Helpdesk by calling 020 8313 4471 or landscape.helpdesk@bromley.gov.uk

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Friends are voluntary partners and providers who actively participate in the development and maintenance of individual parks and residential streets. Their activities form part of the Divisional Action Plan, the Bromley Biodiversity Plan, and Central Govt White Papers – *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Transparency in Outcomes Proposals for a Public Health Outcomes Framework* (Spring 2011) *The Role of Local Government in Promoting wellbeing* (Spring 2011), *Localism Bill* (Dec 2010) *Empowering Communities to Influence Local Decision Making* (June 2009), *Committees in Control: Real Power to Real People* (July 2008) and *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (Oct 2006)

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Expenditure in the region of £27,610 was spent in the 2010/11 from the P&GS and £30,000 from the Streetscene budgets to support the delivery of Friends activities – this includes training, the purchase of tools and protective clothing, and pump-priming of small scale parks improvement works. It also includes insurance to cover Friends events, and health and safety equipment and training for Friends Officers.
- 5.2 To offset this in the past year, the Friends of P&GS have brought in an additional £265,860 park investment into the Borough through external grants, donations, sponsorship and sales, together with an additional 30,750 hours of volunteer labour, which is worth £220,150 to the Council.
- 5.3 As mentioned in 3.5 above another £245,040 has been delivered via officers, of which £119,130 has gone through Bromley’s accounts during 2010/11 and £125,910 through Friends accounts.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Legal & Personnel implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	