

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder

Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services

**For Pre Decision Scrutiny by the Renewal and Recreation PDS
Committee on 7th December 2010**

Date: For Pre Decision Scrutiny by the Adult and Community PDS Committee
on 29th March 2011

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

Title: THYME OUT SCHEME

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Chief Officer: Marc Hume, Director of Renewal and Recreation

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the 'Thyme Out' project which obtained external funding through the successful award of £308,320 from the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund. At the Adult and Community Services Portfolio meeting held on the 10 March 2009 Members requested regular six-monthly updates on the progress of the participants and project since the start of the Scheme in May 2009.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That the Portfolio Holder notes the progress of the project which aims to target improving life chances of adult with learning disabilities.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: N/A.
 2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence. also Quality Environment and Excellent Council
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost £425,740 over three years
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-recurring cost.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: None
 4. Total current budget for this head: £425,740 over three years
 5. Source of funding: £308,320 - Big Lottery Fund
£55,620 - Environmental Services
£61,800 - Adult and Community Services
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): - two additional members of staff funded by the Big Lottery for the life of the project.
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: - N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): - 40 people with learning disabilities living in the London Borough of Bromley, over the life of the three year project, will benefit from training and work experience leading to possible full-time employment and thereby reducing dependency on Council systems.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? <please select>
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3. COMMENTARY

Project Delivery

- 3.1 In February 2008 Adult and Community Services undertook a consultation with its service users to ascertain if their training and recreational requirements were being met. This consultation highlighted the lack of gardening activities available to them. The consultation also highlighted the service users' desire to contribute towards their own care plans enabling them to control what they do, how and when they do it in order to equip them to engage with the wider community and be recognised as independent contributors to society.
- 3.2 In response Bromley Fields Studies Centre (BFSC) organised gardening 'taster sessions' that proved popular. A number of participants asked if they could continue to work with BFSC and an external funding bid to the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund for £308,000 was successfully secured to develop the project into 'Thyme Out'.
- 3.3 The Bromley Field Studies Centre have now held two successful taster days on 21 April 2009 and 21 July 2010 in the grounds of the Civic Centre, Bromley inviting people with learning disabilities, their families and carers living within the London Borough of Bromley to learn more about the Thyme Out project. A total of 43 participants have now been recruited.
- 3.4 The first cohort completed their 18 month training on 7th October 2010. A further 21 people have been recruited and have started their 18 month horticultural and life skills training on the 15th October 2010 to complete on 31st April 2012.
- 3.5 The Thyme Out headquarters is based in the "Alligator House", a previous porters' mess room and a derelict conservatory, situated within the Civic Centre grounds. The space has been renovated by funding from the Big Lottery and the London Borough of Bromley.
- 3.6 Bromley Mencap – Jobmatch, are working closely with the Thyme Out project to assist all participants find meaningful voluntary, paid and unpaid employment. Jobmatch provides a job coach who runs weekly job club activities include: CV writing, interview techniques, information, advice and guidance, signposting, placement support, job carving and job brokerage.

Participant progress

Practical Training

- 3.7 English Landscapes, the Council's grounds maintenance contractors, handed over responsibility of all the grounds maintenance of the Bromley Palace Park (the Civic Centre's grounds) fourteen acre site on 1 June 2009 to the Bromley Field Studies Centre and the Thyme Out project. All team members have successfully and fully engaged in the tasks required to and have learnt horticultural techniques and gained the relevant skills to confidently maintain this high profile site.
- 3.8 The project has surpassed all expectations. Attendance has been 99% with all participants arriving on time, undertaking the training and work with great enthusiasm taking great pride in their work and achievements. Project staff and participants have reported increased confidence, fitness and pride in the Thyme Out project's activities and associated events. As part of the Big Lottery contract the project has gathered over 1500 overwhelming positive feedback questionnaires from the local community. The questionnaires were designed to assess the impact of the project has on the wider community to enable them to have a better understanding of the skills and contribution people with learning disabilities offer.

Qualifications achieved to date

- 3.9 The Thyme Out participants completing in October 2010 have all achieved a City and Guilds, Skills for Life horticultural qualification awards and qualifications as well as a certificate in the British Red Cross' Inclusive First Aid' Programme.

Placements

- 3.10 To enable participants to build on their life skills training, all have undertaken a variety of additional work experience placements. These placements have taken place at: the Churchill Theatre, LBB Customer Contact Centre, the Shaw Trust, McDonald's, Coolings Garden Centre, the Phoenix Centre, and Next Steps in Thyme (a sister project, design, landscape and build of a residential gardens for adult residents with learning disabilities.

Paid and unpaid employment progress for first cohort completing the first 18 month Thyme Out training programme:

Successful Participants	
1	Secured paid employment by the Learning Disability Partnership Board as a consultant.
1	Secured paid work at Lloyds Bar, Bromley as an assistant barman.
1	Secured and set up his own micro-business, running the All Seasons fruit stall in central Bromley supported by his one-to-one carer.
1	Secured a volunteer position as a gardener for the Phoenix Centre.
4	Referred to the Shaw Trust to join their team maintaining the grounds of Croydon Cemetery.
5	Joined a new project – "Next Steps in Thyme" as volunteer landscape gardeners.
2	Did not wish to pursue external work and placements and have been referred back to Day Care Services.
1	Moved to Sussex.
1	Continues to work with "Job Match" to pursue further work.
1	Left the project due to an ongoing court case.

Community Events

- 3.11 Thyme Out and the friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens are submitting a bid to Community Wildlife, Big Lottery programme in November 2010. If successful the fund will pay for: community conservation and gardening workshops, a natural heritage trial of the grounds, interpretation leaflet for families and young people, a dipping pond platform and further improved planting schemes.

- 3.12 The project has run a number of events to encourage staff and the community to integrate with the project. These have included: bulb planting, composting, healthy lifestyles workshops, seasonal plant sales and walks and tours of the grounds. These have been enthusiastically attended by staff and the local community alike. Revenue from sales have been ploughed back into the project to fund planting improvements.

Future Jobs Fund

- 3.13 The Bromley Fields Studies Centre was awarded £429,000 to run a Future Jobs Fund programme from January 2010 – April 2011. The fund paid has paid for the creation of 66 community benefit jobs for young unemployed people paid at minimum wage for six months. As part of this scheme six jobs were created to assist the Thyme Out project. Four assistant horticultural assistants and two administration assistants. (Two employees with learning disabilities were recruited). The scheme has benefited both projects. Thyme Out has gained with physical horticultural and administration support. The young people have gained invaluable experience and knowledge not only in green space management but also experience of the care sector and in particular working with people with learning disabilities.

Awards

- 3.14 In July 2010, Thyme Out project won **Green Flag** (a national quality standard for managing parks and green spaces) a first for the Bromley Palace Park (Civic Centre grounds) and in addition ‘**a Special Innovation Award**’ as part of the Green Flag scheme. The judges commented on the holistic approach and strong community and partnership links the project had managed to achieve in such a short space of time.

Management of the Civic Centre Grounds

- 3.15 A management plan for the Civic Centre grounds, including a biodiversity schedule, was compiled at the beginning of the project and is a live working document. The plan shapes the maintenance schedule, community activities and improvements for the site over the next five years. Application to the Green Flag scheme for 2011 is underway.
- 3.16 The project has developed the grounds by replanting a number of borders, uncovering some of the overgrown heritage features and planting of 10,000 bulbs. Tree works around the lake and further planting schemes are planned for late autumn and spring 2011.

The Future

- 3.17 The steering committee formed in February 2009 continues to meet quarterly assisting the project to look at a range of options for the continuation of Thyme Out. For example:
- a) The Big Lottery have announced a new round of Reaching Communities funding, applications can be made up until 2013. The Bromley Field Studies plan to re apply for this funding stream to extend and build on the current Thyme Out project delivery.
 - b) Thyme Out has been commissioned to consult, design and build gardens for adult residents with learning disabilities as part of Adult and Community Services and it is hoped this opportunity will generate further commissions and income to provide volunteer and paid and unpaid work for adults with learning disabilities.

- c) London Borough of Bromley's environment team will be approached to discuss landscape maintenance options in addition to the management of the Civic Centre grounds.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Thyme Out project meets the key objectives of a number of local (Bromley) and national planning priorities.

a) Bromley's Community Plan

- People, particularly vulnerable adults, are free to lead active independent lives
- People with disabilities are able to maximize their potential

b) Adult and Community Portfolio Plan: Priority Outcome 4

- Enhancing opportunities for all to have greater access and ability to make choices and exercise control over their own lives

c) Bromley's Day Service Strategy

- Day opportunities should be provided in inclusive settings with more opportunities for learning and employment

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 A budget summary is shown below:

Budget Summary	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
	£	£	£	£
Initial capital works	47,546	0	0	47,546
Staffing	71,858	73,780	76,034	221,672
Consultancy	2,318	24,553	25,290	52,161
General running expenses	24,851	39,608	39,902	104,361
Total Costs	146,573	137,941	141,226	425,740

Source of Funding	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
	£	£	£	£
Big Lottery	105,912	98,225	104,183	308,320
Environmental Services	18,540	18,540	18,540	55,620
Adult & Community Services	20,600	20,600	20,600	61,800
Total	145,052	137,365	143,323	425,740

5.2 The Table below shows the actual spend for 2009/10 and projected spend for 2010/11:

Actual Spend	2009/10	2010/11	Total
	£	£	£
Initial capital works	47,546	0	47,546
Staffing	65,350	73,050	138,400
Consultancy	16,390	24,553	40,943
General running expenses	11,457	51,891	63,348
Total	140,743	149,494	290,237

Source of Funding (Spend)	2009/10	2010/11	Total
	£	£	£
Big Lottery	99,849	106,385	206,234
Environmental Services	18,540	18,960	37,500
Adult & Community Services	20,600	21,070	41,670
Other Income	1,754	3,079	4,833
Total	140,743	149,494	290,237

5.3 £18,540 per annum will be re-directed from the current grounds maintenance budget for the Civic Centre site to the Thyme Out project. Accordingly, at the end of the three-year project the grounds maintenance contractor will revert to the amount in the specification and associated budget unless a continuation strategy has been sought for Thyme Out.

5.4 As highlighted in 3.13, the Future Jobs Fund programme has funded six posts (up to £30k in total), which have supported the Thyme Out project.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A horticultural team leader and assistant have been in position since April 2009. The full cost of employing these staff on fixed term contracts for the life of the three year project is covered within the grant's allocation.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Legal Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Big Lottery – Reaching Communities – Grant Offer Big Lottery – Reaching Communities – Application