

CABINET

Accountable Body Authorisation for Community Groups- Update 3rd Oct 2017

Report of Chief Officer (Environment)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To approve delegated responsibility to the Chief Officers (Environment) and (Resources) to authorise and accept external funding applications and the council to act as the accountable body for community bodies working to improve facilities on council owned land.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision		Referral from Cabinet Member
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision		4 th September 2017		
This report is public.				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR HUGHES

- (1) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Officer (Environment), in agreement with the Section 151 Officer, to approve the making and acceptance of external funding bids above the key decision threshold where:
 - any such bid is for the purposes of improving public open space in the District; and
 - it can be contained within the budget and policy framework and would not require redirection of resources between service areas, functions or activities on an ongoing basis.
- (2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in agreement with the Chief Officer (Environment), to adopt the role of “accountable body” where appropriate, in order to support formally constituted ‘Friends of’ and community groups in helping to improve public open space in the District, subject to due diligence and any financial implications being contained within the budget and policy framework.
- (3) That that above delegations remain in place until October 2021 and be subject to review at that time.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet of August 2015 agreed the following in relation to the report attached as Appendix 1

That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Officer (Environment), in agreement with the Section 151 Officer, to approve the making and acceptance of external funding bids above the key decision threshold where:

- *any such bid is for the purposes of improving public open space in the District; and*
- *it can be contained within the budget and policy framework and would not require redirection of resources between service areas, functions or activities on an ongoing basis.*

(2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in agreement with the Chief Officer (Environment), to adopt the role of “accountable body” where appropriate, in order to support formally constituted ‘Friends of’ and community groups in helping to improve public open space in the District, subject to due diligence and any financial implications being contained within the budget and policy framework.

(3) That that above delegations remain in place until July 2017 and be subject to review at that time.

- 1.2 As bids for funding in these areas tend to have very tight timescales the agreed delegations streamline the process and allow for timely response.
- 1.3 Since Cabinet’s decision the delegations have been used as follows. The table highlights that whilst only the second delegation (regarding accountable body) has been used during the period, this does not preclude higher value funding opportunities above the key decision threshold coming forward in future.

Group	Date	External Funding	Description
Friends of Coronation field and Freemans Wood	June 17	£10,100	Installation of outdoor gym on Coronation Field
Friends of Storey Gardens	Mar 17	£10,760	Improve access to Tasting Garden (a handrail to the meeting house lane steps, hedging to make safe the perimeter barrier, a new disabled access back door for the storey building, materials to create ramp from lower to upper level of the outer garden, tree pruning within the garden and stone benches)
Friends of Bay Cottage	Dec 16	£40,128	Replacement of play area include high quality site improvements
Friends of Regent Park	Mar 16	£2,000	two noticeboards
Branksome TARA	Nov 15	£7,554	Refurbishment of play area
Friends of Greaves Park	Sept 15	£11,335	Installation of new piece of play equipment with safety surfacing
Friends of Williamson Park	Aug 15	£30,000	Contribution towards removal of existing play area and installation of two new play areas

- 1.4 This review highlights the excellent work friends of groups have done to help improve open space and play facilities in the District.
- 1.5 Besides the above of course there is much more invaluable support and work provided by groups, communities and individuals who want to enhance our District, as well as significant in kind contributions from businesses and suppliers.
- 1.6 As set out in the report in Appendix 1 the ability to quickly bid for and accept funding is helpful to these groups and the Council.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 In many cases bids for funding in these areas tend to have very tight timescales so agreeing to delegate as outlined in the recommendations below will streamline the process and allow for timely response. Whilst the Council accepts some risk as accountable body as can be seen allowing this delegation provides the opportunity to support community groups to improve public open space.
- 2.2 The delegated decision responsibility will only relate to projects on council owned land and where ongoing maintenance has been agreed within existing budgets. It is proposed that the delegations remain in place for a period of another 4 years, after which a further update report will be brought back. Furthermore, they would be subject to appropriate due diligence being demonstrated, in accordance with the general requirements of the Financial Regulations.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 Detailed consultation is carried out for each individual project. Master plans are in place each of our parks and in turn form the basis for delivery of future schemes.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Delegate Responsibilities as outlined	Option 2: Seek Cabinet approval on each individual basis
Advantages	<p>As there are so many projects in this area of work, this will save time, allowing officers to focus on supporting the community and delivery of the corporate objective for green spaces.</p> <p>It will allow groups to respond quickly to opportunities which arise.</p> <p>Projects are usually funded by three or four different funding</p>	<p>Allows consideration of specific budgetary pressures and commitment of future budgets as and when bidding opportunities arise.</p>

	<p>bodies. Delegated responsibility will provide flexibility when pulling funding packages together.</p> <p>Enables quick applications to go in to maintain community interest.</p>	
Disadvantages	<p>Annual commitments against existing budget levels may be incurred, reducing future scope to make savings in those areas.</p>	<p>It does not provide the flexibility and responsiveness which is required for these small scale community projects. Some funding is available at short notice which does not easily fit into council procedures and timescales.</p> <p>Due to the quantity of projects and funding applications – the officer time in complying with these requirements on a project by project basis.</p>
Risks	<p>There will be no immediate risk regarding ongoing maintenance costs as this will be addressed at the start of any project, but would be risk associated with committing future years' budgets, potentially.</p> <p>There is a risk that the group don't fulfil their requirements and the funding is reclaimed – Officers work very closely with groups to ensure this does not happen. Acting as the accountable body also allows us to have more control over funding requirements, procurement procedures, quality of work, etc. that may reduce long term risks to the council.</p>	<p>Loss of funding opportunities due to the required timescales.</p> <p>Loss of community interest due to the required timescales especially when funding has been secured and needs spending by a certain date.</p>

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 5.1 The preferred option is option 1 as it enables the council to respond more quickly to securing funding for these relatively small scale community projects and the risks and consequences are considered manageable.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Directly relates to the delivery the councils objective for Green spaces

the council will encourage local communities and individuals to in their local area and become involved in protecting and improving the quality of local areas, parks and public spaces in a way that is sustainable.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

Individual bids all require impact assessments as part of the submission

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is not expected that there will be any additional financial implications arising for the Council as improvements will only be carried out on Council owned land with associated revenue implications such as ongoing maintenance costs being addressed as part of each individual project.

The Council is experienced in managing external funds and has robust arrangements in place for administering such funding as well as undertaking the role of Accountable Body. It is expected therefore, that the proposal can be managed within current staff resources.

Should any specific financial implications or sensitivities arise in relation to an individual project or scheme, however, then these will be reported to Cabinet for their consideration in the usual way.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

None

Information Services:

None

Property:

Property Group will be consulted with where appropriate.

Open Spaces:

Enable officers to respond quicker to secure external funding for the improvement of outdoor areas.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments (she has contributed to this report).

MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS

The monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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