

KEY DECISION

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Executive Director for Community Services

Green and Resilient Spaces Fund – Permission to Bid

Date: 14 September 2021

Key decision: No

Class: N/A

Ward(s) affected: Downham

Contributors:

Vince Buchanan, Head of Parks, Sport and Leisure

Outline and recommendations

This report sets out details of the Mayor of London's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund and seeks consent to submit a funding bid of up to £750,000, which if successful will support the delivery of improvements on the eastern side of Beckenham Place Park.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Mayor and Cabinet 24 April, 2019 allocated £1,140,000 from the Council's Capital programme to the regeneration of the eastern part of the park, with the understanding that the additional funding required is secured from other partners.

1 Summary

1.1 In July 2021 the Mayor of London launched the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund, a new £4m fund for green spaces in the capital. There is a strong alignment between the fund objectives and the aims of the Beckenham Place Park East project which is at an advanced state of development. This paper highlights some of the key details of the fund and seeks Executive Director for Community Services' agreement to submit a bid for up to £750,000 to support the delivery of improvements on the eastern side of Beckenham Place Park. There are no other substantially developed green space projects which could be put forward for this funding opportunity.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To approve the submission of a funding bid of up to £750,000 to the Mayor of London's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund.

3. Policy Context

3.1 The proposed improvement to the eastern side of Beckenham Place Park will contribute to Council priorities.

3.2 A key corporate priority for the council as set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018–2022 is 'Making Lewisham greener' ensuring everyone enjoys our green spaces and benefits from a healthy environment as we work to protect and improve our local environment. The Strategy outlines a commitment to preservation of our award-winning green spaces.

3.3 Lewisham's Parks and open spaces strategy 2020–2025 sets out the vision for parks and open spaces to be 'to be the heart and lungs for Lewisham, connecting active, healthy and vibrant local communities' and provides a strategic framework for the management and development of open spaces within the borough that seeks to protect, create, enhance, and connect spaces and people. The Parks and Open Space Strategy 2020-2025 highlights that up to 6000 new homes could be built in wards surrounding Beckenham Place Park East and prioritises the park for improvement.

3.4 The improvements to the eastern side of Beckenham Place Park are also in line with Lewisham's Local Plan 2020-2040 which sets out key strategic objectives to:

- Sustain and create inclusive neighbourhoods and communities that reflect and reinforce the diversity and cultural heritage of Lewisham's people and places
- Help London to achieve National Park City status and ensure all Lewisham residents benefit from access to high quality green space, by protecting, enhancing and connecting the Borough's network of parks, open and water spaces
- Promote and protect the ecological, biodiversity and amenity value of the Borough's natural assets
- Protect and enhance open and green spaces, including by expanding the role of BPP as a key visitor destination.
- Enhance the environmental quality and amenity value of the Ravensbourne and Pool Rivers. Improve public access to the rivers with new and improved routes

3.5 At London-wide level, the Mayor of London's Environment Strategy 2018 brings together approaches to every aspect of London's environment, integrating the following areas: air quality, green infrastructure, climate change mitigation and energy, waste, adapting to climate change, ambient noise and low carbon circular economy.

3.6 The Mayor of London supported London in being declared the world's first National Park City in July 2019, aims to make more than 50% of the city green by 2050, and is working to make our city's parks, green spaces and waterways great places for people and spaces where wildlife can thrive. The Mayor of London has established a Green Spaces Commission of independent experts. The Commission have been working to develop and review new ways to deliver park management to help address the ongoing funding pressures boroughs are facing.

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- 3.7 The Mayor of London wants all Londoners to have access to high quality parks and green spaces and for these places to be managed to provide the green infrastructure network that London needs. The Mayor's report, Natural Capital Accounts for Green Spaces in London shows for the first time the economic value of health benefits that Londoners get from the capital's public parks and green spaces. The research shows that for each £1 spent by local authorities and their partners on public green space, Londoners enjoy at least £27 in value.
- 3.8 Through policies in the new London Plan, the Mayor of London protects parks and green spaces and encourages more greening of the urban environment.

4. Background - The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund

4.1 On 24 April, 2019 Mayor and Cabinet considered further capital funds for Beckenham Place Park. The decision was that 'additional capital programme contribution of £1.936m be approved to secure the investment'. Of that amount, £1,140,000 was allocated to 'Regeneration of the eastern side of the park'. At that time the report noted that 'Officers have had discussions with ... the GLA and are hopeful of securing funding ... over the next 12-15 months. ... The GLA currently have no capital funds available'. Mayor and Cabinet were asked to allocate funds on the understanding that the additional funding required is secured from other partners' (paragraph 8 of the report).

4.2 Subject to the decision now sought, further funds are hopefully available from the Mayor of London's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund. Given that the Mayor and Cabinet decision in 2019 allocated capital funds and set out approval to the approach that 'additional funding required [would be] secured from other partners', the decision to apply to the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund does not require further authorisation from Mayor and Cabinet.

4.3 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund is part of the London Recovery Board's Green New Deal Mission, one of nine missions jointly developed by the Mayor and London Councils to guide the capital's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Green New Deal Mission aims to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies and improve air quality by doubling the size of London's green economy by 2030 to accelerate job creation for all. The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund projects should help deliver the Mission's four overarching objectives:

- improve London's natural environment, improve air quality and tackle the climate and ecological emergency
- promote and incentivise activities that sustain and grow London's green economy
- prioritise interventions reducing health inequalities and social injustices
- engage Londoners and businesses in the journey to become a zero pollution and greener city.

4.3 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund is an invitation to London boroughs and other organisations with responsibility for public spaces to contribute to a green recovery by delivering exemplar projects at scale. A total of £4 million is available, and grants of between £250,000 and £750,000 are offered for projects that can start in 2021-22 and be completed by March 2024.

4.4 Around 10 exemplar Green and Resilient Space projects will be funded. Up to eight further projects may be selected for development funding in order to create a pipeline

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of projects ready to deliver when additional funding becomes available. Selected projects will be located in London's most disadvantaged and climate vulnerable areas or areas where residents have been most severely affected by the pandemic.

- 4.5 All projects must demonstrate how they will benefit their local community. The Mayor of London is particularly keen to support projects that will provide opportunities and positive outcomes for these groups and for Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners who are more likely to live in areas of deficiency of access to green space or in areas where green-space quality is poor. Proposals that actively involve local stakeholders, including community groups, in project development, design and implementation are encouraged.

Funding available

- 4.6 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund is a £4 million multi-year programme. The fund will be distributed as follows:
- Grants of between £250,000 and £750,000 to cover 70 per cent of the cost of delivery of exemplar Green and Resilient Spaces projects. A minimum of 30 per cent of the overall cost must be match funded. The projects will be expected to start in 2021/22, deliver tangible outputs and impact in the first 12 months, with the majority of the grant being spent by March 2023. Projects should be completed by March 2024.
 - Grants of up to £50,000 to cover 70 per cent of the cost of developing exemplar Green and Resilient Spaces projects, (e.g. feasibility studies, initial design work, public engagement). A minimum of 30 per cent of the overall cost of the development work must be match funded. Development work will be expected to start by November 2021 and complete by December 2022.

Match funding

- 4.7 Projects must provide a minimum of 30 per cent of project costs as match funding.

What will be supported

- 4.8 Green and Resilient Spaces projects will help create neighbourhoods with good access to high quality green spaces and a green and climate resilient public realm which supports the mental and physical health and wellbeing of local people. Exemplar, large-scale projects which provide high quality green spaces close to where people live and work will be supported. These should be planned as part of a network of green spaces and green routes to encourage walking and cycling and to connect wildlife habitats, in turn linked to a wider network of green infrastructure. Existing green spaces should be enhanced to ensure they are welcoming, climate resilient and meet the needs of local people. The wider public realm should be designed to enhance climate resilience including to reduce flood and heat risk and conserve public water supplies.
- 4.9 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund's objectives are to:
- enhance London's green and blue spaces and make the built environment greener to help the capital adapt and respond to the climate and ecological emergency
 - support innovative public space projects that primarily deliver climate resilience and greening outcomes but also contribute to air quality and active travel objectives
 - address the environmental and health inequalities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic by prioritising interventions that target the areas of highest need due to

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climate vulnerability and multiple deprivation and that benefit the communities most impacted by the pandemic

- build capacity and green skills as part of the Mayor's Green New Deal ambition to double the green economy in London.

4.10 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund will prioritise projects and strategies that deliver outcomes in line with the Green New Deal and programme objectives including:

- improved access to green space to support physical and mental health and reduce health inequalities, especially amongst Londoners currently lacking good access to open space
- increased resilience to the impacts of climate change, including through providing shade, reducing the risk of overheating, reducing surface water and fluvial flood risk and conserving water resources
- improved air and water quality, and reduced exposure to air pollution
- enhanced biodiversity and ecological resilience, creation of wildlife habitat and increased tree canopy cover
- increased green skills, local community capacity and cohesion
- enhanced connectivity between green spaces, and spaces which encourage walking and cycling.

4.11 The types of projects that the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund might fund are demonstrated in the case studies in the fund prospectus, and include:

- creation of new high-quality public green spaces, especially in locations where current access is poor and where this would help reduce health inequalities
- better management of water and reduced flood risk through sustainable drainage and natural flood management measures, local water storage and reuse, restoring waterways and creating wetlands
- restoration and creation of wildlife habitats to help support London's Nature Recovery Network, especially creating and restoring priority habitats including species-rich woodland and flower-rich grassland
- improvements to the accessibility of green spaces through new entrances, access routes and green connections between sites, or by opening up currently inaccessible sites
- improvements to the design of green spaces to make them more inclusive to all Londoners, especially those from communities who are underrepresented in green spaces
- improvements to streets and other public spaces by retrofitting green and climate resilient infrastructure including sustainable drainage, trees, cool roofs and outdoor cool spaces and pocket parks
- activation of underperforming open spaces, such as those on many of London's housing estates (including making them more welcoming to non-residents, adding food growing opportunities and providing new skills opportunities), or poorly used amenity green spaces.

Project sites

4.12 Projects must be on sites which are (or will be) freely publicly accessible. A priority will be given to projects which are located in areas of high climate vulnerability. Applicants should demonstrate that the proposed site is of strategic significance in terms of location and size. Project sites could comprise a single large park or green space (of around District Park size or larger (20 ha plus) or be a series of interlinked spaces which together are of strategic significance. Applicants should also demonstrate how

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their proposed projects fit within a wider green infrastructure or green space strategy and a wider strategy for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Equality

- 4.13 As a public-sector organisation, the GLA must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct which is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. It must advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who don't have that characteristic. As recipients of public funding, successful applicants will also need to meet this Duty.
- 4.14 As part of the London Recovery programme, the London Recovery Board gave the missions a strong mandate to address inequalities, and in particular the racial inequalities that have had such a devastating effect on Black, Asian and minority ethnic people during the COVID-19 pandemic..

Permissions and risks

- 4.15 Projects will need to be developed to a stage that they can be delivered on the ground by 2024 with the majority of the grant being spent by March 2023. Planning permission or other permits should either be secured at time of application or to be secured by the time a grant agreement is signed (i.e. by February 2022).

Key Application and Delivery Dates

- 4.15 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund has a two-stage application process:
1. Expression of Interest by 30 September 2021
 2. Full Application (if invited) December 2021
- 4.16 Applications will be assessed by a panel of GLA officers and members of the Green and Resilient Spaces Expert Panel who will score and rank them against the criteria below:
- Meeting the aims of the Fund (weighting: 40 per cent)
 - Engaging and supporting Londoners (weighting: 20 per cent)
 - Readiness to deliver (weighting: 20 per cent)
 - Leaving a positive legacy (weighting: 20 per cent)

5. Beckenham Place Park East

- 5.1 The development work for the Beckenham Place Park East project is at an advanced stage. The exciting designs for the eastern side of the park have been developed over the past 18 months in close collaboration with the Environment Agency and with extensive public engagement. The scheme will bring activity and interest to the east of the park with a focus on nature, interaction with the River Ravensbourne, new and enhanced play and activity for all ages. The designs very much complement the recent transformation of the western side of the park, which was part funded by the Mayor of

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London Green Capital Grants Fund in 2018 and is cited in the current Green and Resilient Spaces Fund funding prospectus as case study of good practice.

- 5.2 A key component of the design Beckenham Place Park East is to introduce water management within the park in a natural way, using gentle landforms that create subtle features within the landscape, increase wildlife and habitat value and diversity, whilst also reducing flood risk to local communities. A new flowing series of spaces and rolling landforms along the perimeter and an extended network of footpaths will offer opportunities to diversify walking, running and cycle routes around the park and allow more of the park to be explored and enjoyed by everyone.
- 5.3 Accessibility to the river will be opened up in a sensitive way that will maintain the natural environment of the river, whilst allowing greater opportunities for interaction with the water and the water's edge. We will also be better connect the east and western sides of the park and improve entrances to the East side.
- 5.4 Enhanced opportunities for play are key to improvements, and new and enhanced opportunities for both prescriptive and non-prescriptive play for a wide range of ages will be provided.
- 5.5 The project team have been liaising with the Environment Agency in order to secure flood relief funding and grant in aid to support the flood mitigation and habitat improvement measures in the scheme. The precise contribution of the Environment Agency is dependent on final flood modelling, which is ongoing, and a formulaic calculation of flood and associated environmental benefits which will be set out in a business case to be submitted for approval by the Environment Agency in October 2021.
- 5.6 In order to achieve the project objectives additional funding is needed and Executive Director for Community Services is asked to endorse a bid for the Mayor of London's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund. The project at Beckenham Place Park will meet many of the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund objectives:
- enhancing flood resilience through the provision of 25,000m³ of fluvial flood storage in a series of new landforms during peak flood events
 - increasing woodland tree cover and enhancing grassland habitats
 - creating new and improved habitats including enhancing 1 km of the Ravensbourne River that runs through the park and creating new aquatic habitat
 - creating new pathways and routes opening up more of the park to be accessible to the public including the creation of a new fitness/activity trail
 - creating new play facilities that are rooted in the natural environment of the park
- 5.7 The Fund wants to see Londoner's from more deprived backgrounds benefitting from these improvements. A key aim of the Beckenham Place project is to forge strong links between the communities of Downham and Bellingham (some of our more deprived wards) and the park.
- 5.8 The Beckenham Place Park east Project will deliver in line with the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund timescales. We will submitting a planning application for the works in September his summer (2021) , with view to construction commencing on site summer 2022 and completing summer 2023.
- 5.9 Given the decision made by Mayor and Cabinet on 24 April 2019, the Beckenham Place Park project already has sufficient funding allocated to be used as match funding

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for the Green and resilient Spaces Fund so this proposed funding bid places no further burden on the capital programme.

6. Other options considered for Green and Resilient Spaces Fund

- 6.1 There are no other options in the borough that meet the objectives and requirements of the fund and with the necessary readiness to deliver within the constraints of the funding timetable as set out above.
- 6.2 As the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund is open to public and civil society organisations including registered charities, formally constituted community groups, social and not-for-profit businesses and tenants and residents' associations. Officers have shared details of this funding opportunity with members of the 'The Baring Trust' who are based in Grove Park as they may wish to seek to secure development funding of £50,000 for such things as feasibility studies, initial design work, public engagement related to their aspiration to establish Railway Children's Urban National Park

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 This report recommends that the Executive Director for Community Services approves the submission of a funding bid of up to £750,000 to the Mayor of London's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund. If successful, the Council will need to provide match funding equivalent to a minimum of 30 per cent of project costs as match funding. In the case of Beckenham Place Park, this match funding is already secured through the Mayor and Cabinet's agreement 24 April, 2019 to allocate £1,140,000 from the Council's Capital programme to the regeneration of the eastern part of the park, with the understanding that the additional funding required is secured from other partners.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 As set out in this report (particularly paragraphs 4.1 and 5.9) Mayor and Cabinet have already authorised the allocation of capital funding to this project (which will be used as match funding if the proposed bid is successful) on the basis that additional funding is obtained. Accordingly, authorisation to the submission of the bid to the Green and Resilient Spaces Fund may be given by the Executive Director and does not therefore require further authorisation from Mayor and Cabinet, nor is it a key decision.
- 8.2 In taking this decision, the Council's public sector equality duty must be taken into account. It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 8.3 It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who

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do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed above. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for Mayor and Cabinet, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. Mayor and Cabinet must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

- 8.4 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found on the EHRC website.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 In regenerating the park, officers are seeking to address issues which hinder use and enjoyment of the space by the widest section of the community. A number of physical interventions to enhance facilities and accessibility will be implemented through the project, addressing key issues such as inaccessible toilets, poor quality paths etc. These physical improvements will be combined with outreach to target groups who might otherwise feel reluctant or unable to use the park to understand and break down any further barriers to use.
- 9.2 Events and activities will be developed to appeal to the wider population. Evaluation surveys will allow officers to compare usage prior to works with that that occurs after completion with the aim of ensuring that usage is more reflective of the surrounding population.
- 9.3 The Green and Resilient Spaces Fund places a particular emphasis on extending the benefits of their investment to traditionally under-represented groups and this is already a focus of our plans.
- 9.4 Equalities issues will be addressed as part of the application process as set above. Monitoring the impact of projects using qualitative and equalities data (gender, age, disability, ethnic background, religious background, sexual orientation) is an integral part of this.

10. Climate change and environmental implications

- 10.1 Climate change and the environment are at the heart of the project. The improvement to the park will increase resilience to the impacts of climate change, including providing shade, reducing the risk of overheating, reducing surface water and fluvial flood risk and conserving water resources. The project will see improved air and water quality, and reduced exposure to air pollution, enhanced biodiversity and ecological resilience, creation of wildlife habitat and increased tree canopy cover, increased green skills, local community capacity and cohesion.

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11. Crime and disorder implications

- 11.1 Increasing the use of Beckenham Place Park is key to reducing anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in this open space. Investing in the park and removing damaged and derelict features will also deter anti-social behaviour, helping people to feel safer and discouraging casual vandalism.
- 11.2 In addition, there are plans to engage residents and school pupils extensively in the park, through volunteering opportunities and environmental education. As volunteers invest in the open space, the sense of ownership and pride in the park will grow. This in turn moves them to actively look after the space, and deters anti-social behaviour.

12. Health and wellbeing implications

- 12.1 Renovation and regeneration of the park will provide significant health and well-being opportunities. BPP East will provide communities with increased opportunities for outdoor activities. As part of the project, a programme of volunteering and training will be developed leading to physical and mental health and well-being benefits and increased social cohesion. Building on existing links with local GPs and community groups, and working closely with the NHS and local Primary Care Networks, we will develop a programme of nature-prescribing whereby people suffering from poor mental and physical health will be supported to join activities that will increase health and wellbeing through contact with nature

Background papers

Beckenham Place Park Update, Mayor and Cabinet, 24 April, 2019
<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=22437>

Glossary

[Link to Oxford English Dictionary here.](#)

Report author(s) and contact

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Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources
Abdul Kayoum, Group Finance Manager

Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR
Stephanie Fleck, Principal Solicitor

I approve the recommendations in this report

Signed:



Tom Brown

Executive Director for Community Services

Date: 22 September 2021

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