

GRANT APPLICATION 2014/15 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To promote better use of parks and green spaces to increase physical activity and well-being and encourage a sense of community To support residents to live as healthily and independently as possible To support children and young people in making a positive transition to adulthood	
Organisation	FRIENDS OF CHILDS HILL PARK	<div style="background-color: #d3d3d3; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 5px;">ref</div> 158/G/ENV
Address	c/o 57a Dunstan Road, NW11	
Relevant policy, aims and objectives		
<p>The council is committed to maintaining Barnet as a successful, prosperous place where people want to live and in which an active community can thrive. This includes protecting and enhancing the natural (and built) environment. Development of the Big Society in Barnet seeks to make greater use of local creativity and entrepreneurial spirit and help galvanize new citizen- and community-led projects. Strategic objectives include working with local residents to improve the local environment and empowering people to take responsibility for their health and well-being through improvement in lifestyle. Making parks and green spaces more attractive places for physical activity, entertainment and play is one of the ways in which this may be achieved.</p> <p>The Children and Young People Plan, 2013/16, reflects a focus on improving outcomes for Barnet's younger population, creating the conditions for children and young people, especially those who are vulnerable, to develop skills; acquire knowledge; and engage in positive extra-curricular activities as part of leading a healthy lifestyle.</p>		
Activities / proposal		
<p>The Friends of Childs Hill Park (FCHP) is an unincorporated association with an adopted Charity Commission constitution formed last summer by a group of local residents to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * improve the appearance, and repair the infrastructure, of Childs Hill Park; * create an expanded playground with equipment for all ages and abilities; * encourage greater use of the park, especially for exercise, and develop an activity and education programme, placing it at the heart of the local community. <p>FCHP has worked in partnership with the council's Green Spaces Team to complete phase one of a comprehensive three-year improvement strategy, which has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * creation of a woodland border with 450 native trees and shrubs sourced from the Woodland Trust, planted by volunteers and local schoolchildren in partnership with the council's Green Spaces Team; * resurfacing of the major path through the park and removal of a large area of broken concrete, reseeded as a lawn; * refurbishment of broken benches and bins; * installation of new playground equipment including a zip-wire suitable for children with disabilities, two climbing frames and play items for toddlers; * creation of an outdoor gym; * provision of a family area with picnic, table tennis and chess tables. <p>A re-planting plan has been drawn up in conjunction with a local landscape architect and a parents group has been formed to guide the development of an activity programme for children,</p>		

both of which form part of phase two, extending over the next twelve months, also to include planting of a community orchard and the creation of a 'marsh garden', the subject of this application.

The marsh garden proposal is to transform a largely redundant low-lying area of the park adjacent to the playground, which is often waterlogged and flooded during the winter; slippery; and potentially hazardous, into a safe and natural educational play space for the community. Hard and soft landscaping will seek to address the issue of flooding and the accumulation of unsightly stagnant water. Ornamental planting will focus on the promotion of biodiversity and wildlife. The creation of pathways will open up the site to children in support of environmental learning and for maintenance by volunteers.

The project, due for completion early in 2015, will be implemented in collaboration with the Harington Scheme, a charity that trains and supports young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to find employment in the horticultural and land-based sectors. The new garden will be enhanced with education boards, seating, sculptures and further wetland planting in the immediately adjacent beds as and when further funding is secured. It represents a key element of the development plan for the park and one that may inspire more local people to help with its maintenance and upgrading given the level of interest in what has been achieved to date.

The Green Spaces Team endorses the work of friends of parks groups like FCHP as an effective way of galvanising and empowering local communities to help in maintaining and improving parks and green spaces and securing external funding for those purposes. Phase one of FCHP's three-year improvement programme was delivered in accordance with an implementation plan agreed with the council, harnessing the talents and energy of local people. The marsh garden project represents an innovative way of tackling a serious and potentially dangerous flooding problem in Childs Hill Park, which previous drainage projects have failed to rectify.

Cost and financial need

Phase one of the three-year improvement programme was funded from two grants to FCHP, including a one-off allocation of £50,488 from Street Scene's 2013/14 capital programme to improve the borough's parks, open spaces and green infrastructure on streets, linked to 'section 106' planning obligations, principally used to upgrade and expand the children's playground. A grant of £7,000 by Trust for London helped to create the new family area. Saplings for the new woodland border were donated by The Woodland Trust. At 21/5/2014, FCHP had an unspent balance of £600. Accounts covering the group's first year of activity will be available later this summer.

The cost of creating the marsh garden is shown as £9,975, equal to the grant request, made up of landscaping works and the installation of pathways (£6,000); preparation, conditioning and installation of new planting areas (£2,000); and ornamental planting (£1,975).

The Harington Scheme, which is committed to raising funds to support a training programme for local young people that will embrace a regular programme of management and maintenance of newly developed areas at Childs Hill Park, is seeking a (People's Millions) grant from the Big Lottery for the augmentation and complementary enlargement of the marsh garden.

FCHP has identified a range of other potential sources of funding, including landfill companies, which ring-fence funds for environmental projects, in support of other phase two and future phase three improvements, extending to the spring of 2016, including the development of an educational and activity programme for adults.

The grant recommended acknowledges the special partnership being formed with the Harington Scheme, whose enterprise arm will undertake much of the work on the marsh garden, and how the project will provide a unique opportunity for vulnerable young people to be involved in transforming and maintaining a neglected area of the park as a pilot for possible future similar schemes. The award, which will utilise 50% of this year's former Borough Lottery Fund allocation to the corporate grants budget for environmental and recreational projects, will largely defray the cost of hard and soft landscaping and the creation of pathways, enabling a start to be made on the project this autumn, and will leave a shortfall of £2,475 to be funded in other ways, mainly for the ornamental planting.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

£7,500 (from former Borough Lottery Fund)

Start-up grant
One-off grant

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Special conditions:

Payment of the award should be made subject to (a) agreement of a detailed implementation plan for the marsh garden in consultation with the Green Spaces Team; (b) confirmation that the balance of expenditure will be met from other sources; and (c) monitoring of progress and an undertaking to notify completion of the project.

Target grant outcomes

(a) To develop, for the benefit of the community, a redundant area of Childs Hill Park, protecting and improving the natural environment, and (b) to create opportunities for local young people to volunteer and gain skills in garden creation and biodiversity.

Date: July 2014