

GRANT APPLICATION 2016/17 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	<p>To empower local residents and the community at large to play a more active role in improving their lives, local communities and public services</p> <p>To develop more innovative ways of maintaining parks and green spaces, including through greater partnerships with community groups</p> <p>To focus on using parks to achieve wider public health priorities for the borough, including increasing access to sport and physical activity for young people</p>	
Organisation	FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK	ref 159/G/ENV
Address	c/o 30 Sunnyfield, NW7	
Relevant policy, aims and objectives		
<p>The council is committed to maintaining Barnet as a place where people want to live and in which an active community can thrive. This includes protecting and enhancing the natural environment, recognising that parks and green spaces are amongst the borough's biggest assets. Strategic objectives include empowering residents to take on more personal and community responsibility for keeping Barnet a successful borough, including improving the local environment, and to look after 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 Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People Plan, 2016-20, reflect a commitment to ensure a great start in life for every child and to improve outcomes for Barnet's younger population. Strategic objectives of the Youth & Family Support Service include increasing access to regular sport and physical activity as part of leading a healthy lifestyle.</p>		
Activities / proposal		
<p>The Friends of Mill Hill Park (FMHP) is an unincorporated association formed in 1997 to support the council in protecting, conserving and improving Mill Hill Park, maintaining its community asset value and quickly remedying problems. Including regular users such as dog walkers, tennis players and bowlers, it helps to ensure that the park is kept clean and safe, alerting the council of issues such as fallen trees, damaged equipment or the presence of dangerous dogs. It also leads on raising funds to develop the park and its facilities, especially in support of its use for sports activities such as football (games and coaching), cricket, tennis and bowling, and by children, young people and people with restricted mobility.</p> <p>Recent projects supported by FMHP, either through fundraising or voluntary help, include redevelopment of the children's playground; the creation of an outdoor gym and a basketball court; re-opening of the park's café; and improvements to the toilets.</p> <p>This application concerns a proposal to install a skateboarding facility in Mill Hill Park in response to popular demand, both amongst young people, who currently improvise in creating inherently unsafe ramped surfaces for skateboarding on the concourse areas in the park, and other park users, who consider these arrangements to be intrusive and dangerous. The need for a designated skateboarding ramp area has been an issue raised consistently with FMHP since 2013 and one that has received support from all sections of the community at each annual general meeting since that time. The only existing skateboarding park in Barnet is in Friary Park, which is on the other side of the borough.</p> <p>Skateboarding is typically a peer exercise that promotes agility; the development of new skills;</p>		

and social integration amongst young people, critical facets in the progression to adulthood. The proposed new ramped area will be modelled on the Friary Park facility. To be located in an accessible area of the park, to be agreed with the council, without detracting from its general aspect, its size will take account of proposals to create a much larger free-formed skate park at Copthall as part of that site's future redevelopment. All but one of 73 respondents to a recent survey of the local community signified their support of the proposal.

Street Scene's Green Spaces & Streets Team endorses the work of friends of parks groups like FMHP as an effective way of harnessing the talents and energy of local people in maintaining and improving parks and green spaces and securing external funding for those purposes. It supports the proposal in principle, subject to agreement to implement the project in consultation with the council and in accordance with all necessary consents and quality standards.

Cost and financial need

In 2014/15, FMHP incurred expenditure of £130, mainly on stationery, printing and postage. Income is from subscriptions and donations. At 31/3/2015, it had reserves of £855.88.

In 2012, FMHP was awarded £50,000 from the Big Lottery towards the redevelopment of the children's playground in Mill Hill Park, the biggest grant that it has obtained to date.

The request is for a grant of £10,000 towards project costs for the skateboarding facility originally shown as £54,000 (inclusive of VAT), based on estimates obtained by FMHP using materials considered by the Green Spaces & Streets Team to be inappropriate. The use of recommended materials and compliance with the council's procurement procedures will result in estimated costs of £90,000.

The council's traditional approach to funding projects of this nature is to contribute once achievement of a fundraising target is close. Consideration of this application has been deferred until now pending news of FMHP's fundraising efforts. Its stated intention is to apply once again to the Big Lottery, but no such bid has yet been made and no other funds have yet been secured, rendering any council grant at this stage (likely to be subject to the usual ceiling on one-off grants of £5,000) premature. The application is not therefore supported.

FMHP states that some professional help may be needed to drive the fundraising process forward, expenditure that does not qualify for a corporate grant. Given the localised nature of the project, it may be more appropriate for the group to re-apply to the Hendon Area Committee for a grant as and when its fundraising has started in earnest.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

NIL

Date: August 2016