

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Open Spaces & City Gardens	8 April 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Enjoying Open Spaces and the Natural Environment - Award of grants and review of grant aid criteria	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

The *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment* funding theme was initiated in August 2016 and forms part of the Central Grants Programme (CGP). A pro-active communications plan resulted in seventeen applications for £159k available funds. Twelve organisations have been awarded funding for projects that will take place across the Divisions.

The current grant aid criteria have been reviewed and officers propose a number of minor changes which they hope will increase the number of future applications from a wider number of community, voluntary and charity organisations.

### Recommendations

Members are asked:

- To note the allocation of grant aid for 2018/19 approved under delegated authority to the Open Spaces and City Gardens Chairman and Deputy Chairman
- Approve the proposed amendments to the current *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment* funding criteria as referenced in paragraph 17.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. On 18 July 2016, your Committee agreed the *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment* funding stream. This grant scheme awards funding between £8,000 and £15,000 to community, voluntary and charitable groups under 5 sub themes:
  - a) Connecting communities with their green spaces
  - b) Improving the conservation value of the green spaces
  - c) Improving our knowledge of the biodiversity of the green spaces
  - d) Delivering behaviour change initiatives which reduce the amount of litter and flytipping within green spaces
  - e) Improving mental ill-health through the use of green spaces
 See appendix 1 for full eligibility criteria.
2. Your Committee delegated authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with your Chairman and Deputy Chairman to agree the award of grants.
3. The *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment* funding stream is overseen by CoL's Central Grants Unit (CGU).

4. In 2016/17 eight applications were received and 6 submissions received awards totalling £74,000. In 2017/18 two applications were received and both were granted awards totalling £21,030.
5. In 2018/19 £159,000 was available to award. A communications plan was developed which included production of a poster which was displayed across the Open Spaces sites and internally to Open Spaces staff, twitter posts, information sent to local organisations and 'pinning' information about the grant to the top of our web pages.
6. 'Meet the funder' sessions were held at Epping Forest and Parliament Hill enabling potential applicants to learn more about the funding stream, meet the CGU officer and ask specific application questions. Eight organisations attended these two 'sessions and seven submitted applications of which four were awarded funding.
7. Seventeen submissions were received with a total funding request value of £226,000.
8. Applications and applicant organisations underwent due diligence checks by the CGU to ensure compliance with the established eligibility criteria and a financial assessment by the Chamberlains' Department.
9. All eligible applications were reviewed and assessed by Open Spaces Director and Senior Officers and the Cultural & Visitor Development Director from the Town Clerks Department.
10. The funding award recommendations were approved by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman under delegated authority.

### **Current Position**

#### **2018/19 Awards**

11. Grant funding has been awarded to twelve organisations for projects across the Open Spaces with a total grant value of £155,475. Appendix 2 lists the successful organisations and a brief summary of their projects.
12. Those organisations that were unsuccessful have been informed and given feedback on their submissions.
13. The Awards fell under four of the five sub-themes with no submissions under the theme d) Delivering behaviour change initiatives which reduce the amount of litter and flytipping within green spaces.

#### **Review**

14. The grant aid scheme has been operating for three years and officers have reviewed the current criteria, considered the types of applications received and sent a brief questionnaire to this year's applicants and enquirers.
15. Only five questionnaires were returned providing the following insight and applicants preferences on the grant:

- All applicants had been made aware of the grant by COL officers
- Their submissions had aimed to target more than one sub-theme
- Little preference between one or two funding rounds per year.
- The on-line application form was easy to complete
- Suggestions for maximum and minimum size of grant ranged from £3k to £25k.

16. Officers have reviewed the main funding criteria:

**Sub themes** – There have been no submissions under the sub-theme d) Delivering behaviour change initiatives which reduce the amount of litter and flytipping within green spaces. It is felt that this could be captured under sub-themes a) and c).

**Minimum and maximum grant** – The current minimum value is £8,000 and the maximum is £15,000. A minimum value of £8,000 is felt to be potentially restrictive to smaller organisations or for smaller projects. The maximum of £15k is felt to be large enough for most projects although there may be exceptional projects that could deserve larger funds.

**Reapplying for funding** - Currently the criteria states that; *'you may reapply for funding to deliver a continuation of the same project however; organisations cannot hold more than one of our grants at any one time'*. However, it is not the intention of this grant that organisations become dependent on this funding to deliver activities.

#### **Proposed changes to funding criteria**

17. It is proposed that the following changes be made to the funding criteria:

- i. Remove the sub-theme d) Delivering behaviour change initiatives which reduce the amount of litter and fly tipping within green spaces.
- ii. Amend the wording of sub-theme e) to: Improving mental health through the use of green spaces
- iii. Decrease the minimum value grant from £8,000 to £2,000
- iv. Retain the maximum value grant at £15,000 but add the option that 'up to £20,000 may be considered in exceptional cases'.
- v. Add the wording: *In order to limit organisations becoming dependent on this funding stream applications from new organisations are more likely to be successful than applications for repeat funding.*
- vi. Make clear in the application criteria that the maximum period over which the grant may be spent is three years (currently two), but the total award is as requested in the application.

#### **Finance**

18. £155,475 has been awarded from an available budget of £159,000 in 2018/19. This £159,000 was from an initial budget of £83,000 for 2018/19 with an additional carry forward of £76,000 from the previous financial year.

19. £3,500 remaining from this year's underspend will be put into the standard carry forward process, subject to approval from the Chamberlain in consultation with the Chairman of Finance.

20. It is anticipated that £86,500 will be available to award in 2019/20.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

21. The *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment* funding stream helps deliver the following Corporate Plan 2018-2023 aims and outcomes:

- **Contribute to a flourishing society**
  - 2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
- **Support a thriving economy**
  - 8. We have access to the skills and talent we need.
- **Shape outstanding environments**
  - 11. We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
  - 12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained

22. The grant aid also supports all the Department's business plan main objectives:

- A. Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible
- B. Spaces enrich people's lives
- C. Business practices are responsible and sustainable.

### **Conclusion**

23. This report and appendices provide a summary of the grant applications received in 2018/19 under the theme: *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment*. It also proposes a small number of amendments to the eligibility criteria.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment*: criteria for funding
- Appendix 2 – *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment*: Summary of projects receiving funding in 2018/19
- Appendix 3 - *Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment*: table of grants declined

### **Background Papers**

- *Enjoying Open Space and the Natural Environment* granting funding theme report, Open Spaces & City Gardens, 6 June 2016
- *Implementation of Grant Theme – Enjoying Open Space and the Natural Environment*, Open Spaces & City Gardens, 18 July 2016

### **Gerry Kiefer**

Business Manager, Open Spaces

T: 020 7332 3517

E: [gerry.kiefer@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:gerry.kiefer@cityoflondon.gov.uk)