

MEETING: 28/01/2015

Ref: 12421

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

Amount requested: £139,481

Amount recommended: £89,100

Adv: Sandra Davidson

Base: Hounslow

Benefit: Several SW London

The Charity

The Chiswick House and Gardens Trust (CHGT) was jointly established in 2005 by English Heritage and the London Borough of Hounslow (who had managed the gardens historically). The Trust is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of this Grade 1-listed villa and Grade 1-registered gardens, which have been enjoyed as a public park since 1929. Chiswick House is the first and one of the finest examples of neo-Palladian design in England. The Trust oversaw a £12.1 million project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and private funders which restored the gardens in June 2010. The gardens at Chiswick are the birth place of the English Landscape Movement and have inspired countless others including New York's Central Park.

The Application

Within the grounds of Chiswick House there is a walled garden, parts of which date back to 1682. Like the house and grounds it had become overgrown and dilapidated but in 2005, a group of entrepreneurial local residents began a project to revive it and turn it into a community resource to teach people about horticulture and growing food. Repairs were made to the walls and gates, historic paths relayed and over 140 heritage fruit trees and soft fruits planted. The garden is a produce garden, divided into four quadrants, and fruits, vegetables, pulses, herbs, cereal crops, and companion flowers are grown there. The project is thriving under the leadership of a full-time gardener and part-time volunteer manager.

The Recommendation

This request seeks support for salary and running costs of the successful Kitchen Garden Project including the Kitchen Gardener and part-time volunteer manager. The project has a core pool of regular committed volunteers who work in the kitchen garden at Chiswick every Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm and undertake planting and pruning fruit trees, growing vegetables, weeding, watering, composting, and picking produce. Regular volunteers also staff the garden on open days, selling produce and talking to the public about the garden and their work. The recommendation is lower than the request, (which is to support two posts) as it is your policy for projects such as this to fund a maximum of 1 FTE post:

£89,100 over three years (£29,130; £29,700; £30,270) for the salary of the full-time Kitchen Gardener and associated project costs.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

The kitchen garden is a sheltered and controlled environment so close attention can be given to volunteers who are particularly vulnerable. CHGT promotes the kitchen garden volunteering opportunities on its website and through more than 70 community, educational gardening or health related organisations. The aim of the project is to use the unique kitchen garden for the benefit of the local community with a focus on the most disadvantaged.

In addition, there are 40 Friday morning sessions each year for school children which focus on healthy eating, plant science and art. They work outdoors on practical gardening tasks including digging. Since 2010 over 2,000 school children have benefited from the project.

CHGT is now led by a new Director who has been helping the Trust to plan for the takeover of the management of the house in 2016. It is currently formulating a five year business and fund-raising strategy. Whilst this intensive process is underway the charity is determined to maintain current provision, particularly for community groups and schools, and funding for the Kitchen Garden project is critical to this endeavour. It is hoped that by the end of the grant period, (should you approve one), CHGT will have established sufficient revenue streams to support the project.

Financial Information

Draft accounts for 2013/14 show a deficit on unrestricted funds of £149,230. The charity advises that this is largely due to a shortfall in anticipated grant funding towards expenditure which had already been incurred (approximately £100k). The charity attributes the balance of the deficit to a change in accounting policy for venue hire deposit receipts. These are now accounted for in the year of the event, which required £50k of deposits received in 2013/14 to be recorded in the accounts of 2014/15 when the related events will take place.

For the current year 2014/15 income is forecast to total £830,000 of which £651,000 (78.4%) had been confirmed as at 10th November 2014.

The organisation advises that the cost of generating funds figure was high in 2012/13 and 2013/14 due to the implementation of a new fundraising function. The charity anticipates that these costs will reduce over the next three years and this is supported by a budgeted reduction of these costs in the current year as shown in the table below.

Year end at 31 March	2012/13 Audited Accounts	2013/14 Draft Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Budget
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	845,940	746,320	830,000
Expenditure	833,179	898,890	877,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	184,703	(149,230)	(47,000)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(171,942)	(3,340)	-
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	12,761	(152,570)	(47,000)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	1.5%	(20.4%)	(5.6%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	314,061 (37.1%)	366,315 (49%)	148,000(17.9%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	487,857	292,999	245,999
How many months' worth of expenditure	7.0	3.9	3.4
Reserves Policy target	250,000	250,000	250,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.6	3.3	3.4
Free reserves over/(under) target	237,857	42,999	(4,001)