

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD329

Title: London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme

Executive Summary:

This decision requests funding for and permission to enter into a contract with Groundwork London to administer the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme (“the Scheme”) for 2015-16.

The Scheme will deliver approximately 20 community based tree and woodland projects by March 2016. These projects will include tree planting and woodland management projects, contributing to meeting the Mayor’s target of increasing tree canopy cover by 5 per cent by 2025. The total grant pot is £100k (previously agreed via MD1429).

The contract with Groundwork London will specifically provide the administration of the Scheme at a cost of £13,770. This will include the following: promoting and advertising the grant fund; entering into funding agreements with successful applicants; project monitoring; and providing progress reports and a final report to the Greater London Authority.

Decision:

The Assistant Director approves:

- Expenditure of up to £13,770 as payment to Groundwork London to provide the administration of the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme for 2015-16; and
- An exemption from the requirements of the GLA’s Contracts and Funding Code to seek three or more written quotations for goods or services between £10,000 and £150,000.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT:

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor’s plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Patrick Feehily

Position: Interim Assistant Director -
Environment

Signature:

Date:

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The contract will provide the Greater London Authority (GLA) with a service to administer the London Tree and Woodland [Community Grant Scheme](#) (“the Scheme”) for an additional year in 2015-16.
- 1.2 The Scheme will deliver approximately 20 community based tree and woodland projects by March 2016. These projects will include tree planting and woodland management projects, contributing to meeting the Mayor’s target of increasing tree canopy cover by 5 per cent by 2025.
- 1.3 The proposed contract with Groundwork London will specifically provide the administration of the Scheme, including: promoting and advertising the grant fund; entering into funding agreements with successful applicants; project monitoring; and providing progress reports and a final report to the Greater London Authority.

Background

- 1.4 The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy includes an objective to increase tree canopy cover from 20% to 25% by 2025 (and a further 5% by 2050). This target is reflected in Policy 7.21 of the London Plan. The primary rationale for this increase relates to the potential for an increase in canopy cover to help off-set the predicted impacts of climate change; but it also recognises a number of other potential benefits including: enhancing biodiversity; improving air quality; enhancing local amenity and maintaining London’s reputation as one of the greenest big cities.
- 1.5 The GLA does not own or manage land on which it can plant trees to help meet the Mayor’s targets. Consequently, the GLA relies on a mix of policy development; supporting partnerships and grant-funding projects to support others to undertake tree-planting. This work to increase London’s canopy cover sits within a broader context of the Environment Team’s work on improving London’s green infrastructure; several other projects also contribute to tree planting and engaging Londoners, such as the Big Green Fund.
- 1.6 One way in which the Mayor contributes to meeting this target is through providing resources for tree-planting projects. The Mayor’s Street Tree Initiative and the London Tree and Woodland Grant scheme ran alongside each other from 2012-15. The Street Tree Initiative ended in March 2015 as the Mayor’s target to plant 20,000 street trees during his two terms of office had been achieved. However it has been decided to continue the community element of the Scheme for an additional year. The £100,000 capital funding for the Scheme was authorised by MD1429. However this MD did not make provision for, nor detail, the administration of the Scheme (see paras 1.6, 6.2).

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The Scheme supports community groups and others to undertake tree-planting projects or projects which improve management of woodlands or public access to woodlands. In previous years it has provided in the region of 20 grants per annum, depending on the amounts applied for (of £2k-£10k). Over the three grant rounds from 2012-15 the 68 projects supported by the Scheme involved over 8,000 people in tree-planting and woodland management and over 8,000 trees were planted.

2.2 Objectives of GLA contribution

The Scheme aims to:

- Contribute towards increasing the tree canopy cover within London's built environment by five per cent by 2025
- Engage communities in the management of green space, tree and woodland management
- Ensure trees and woodlands contribute to a high quality environment
- Help foster community and individual well-being and social inclusion through contact with trees and woodlands
- Make sure the right tree is in the right place

- 2.3 The proposed contract with Groundwork London will specifically provide the administration of the Scheme, including: promoting and advertising the grant fund; entering into funding agreements with successful applicants; project monitoring; and providing progress reports and a final report to the GLA.
- 2.4 Groundwork London have previously administered the Mayor's Street Tree Initiative and the Community Grant Scheme. However this was secured through a GLA Funding Agreement with the Forestry Commission (FC) who were contracted to project manage both schemes. Following the completion of the Mayor's Street Tree Initiative (which accounted for the major part of the delivery and cost of the schemes) the Funding Agreement between the GLA and FC has come to an end. As the FC will no longer be involved in the project management of the 2015-16 round of the Scheme it is proposed that the GLA contract directly with Groundwork London for the administration of the Scheme.
- 2.5 Groundwork London have administered the Scheme since 2009 and have built up specialist knowledge about how the Scheme operates, and how to run the grant application, assessment, awarding and monitoring processes. Additionally Groundwork London have specialist experience in the environment field in terms of working with community groups to support environmental projects.
- 2.6 They also already have the capacity in place to be able to provide administrative support to the Scheme. It is proposed that the Scheme would open for applications in July 2015, with grants awarded in September, activity taking place from October to February 2016, and monitoring and evaluation in March 2016.
- 2.7 It is proposed that the contract with Groundwork London covers the time period from 1 June 2015 to 31 March 2016 in order to cover promotion, the application process, disbursement of grants, monitoring delivery and administering claims.
- 2.8 The proposed contract is effectively an extension of an existing contract (albeit one previously issued by the Forestry Commission on our behalf) and is for less than a year. Groundwork London have indicated that there would be no increase on the rate of fees charged to the GLA for 2015-16 from those charged in the previous 3 years (when the contract was managed via the FC).
- 2.9 One alternative would be to go out to tender for another provider to administer the Scheme. There are a limited number of organisations with proven experience of administering grant-based schemes for community groups who have the capacity to provide a pan-London service. The process of identifying suitable contractors, going out to tender and, potentially, changing the administrative framework for the Scheme could lead to delays in delivering the Scheme and require additional GLA staff time to manage the Scheme and the administrative support.

- 2.10 Another option would be to deliver the Scheme in-house. However the cost saving would be relatively small and there would be a need to create an internal administrative infrastructure to mirror that currently provided by the existing provider.
- 2.11 The Single Source Request for Groundwork London to administer the Community Grant Scheme has been approved by procurement. This is on the provision that no other additional costs are incurred and that the contract duration remains from 1 June 2015 to 31 March 2016. The total value is £13,770 (excluding VAT). The Single Source Request is in Appendix 1.

Outcomes

- 2.12 The direct outcome will be a contract with Groundwork London to administer the Scheme. The key outputs for Groundwork London to deliver via this contract are to:
- Distribute CGS grant pot to an estimated 20 projects across London. (Exact number of projects dependent on levels of grant funding awarded, but to be no lower than 12).
 - CGS project to result in tree planting, improved woodland management and community engagement in trees and woodlands. (Measurables: number of trees planted; area of land improved; number of volunteers participating).
- 2.13 As part of a range of GLA led initiatives around trees, parks and green spaces the Scheme contributes to increasing canopy cover in London, with the following outcomes:
- interventions that demonstrably contribute to the likelihood of increases in canopy cover in the longer term;
 - a 5% increase in London's tree-canopy cover by 2025 (from a 2008 baseline of 20%)
 - more Londoners understanding and appreciating the benefits of trees and an increase in canopy cover and willing to take action locally to protect, manage and plant trees and woodlands.

3. Equality comments

The Scheme is open to a wide range of organisations including community groups, resident's associations, charities and business partnerships. The GLA will work with Groundwork London to promote the Scheme to new groups who may not have received funding from the Scheme previously.

Applicants to the Scheme are required to outline how their projects will provide environmental and community benefit. This includes information on the intended beneficiaries of the Scheme projects (including relevant details such as ages, geographic area of residence, ethnicity).

4. Other considerations

4.1 High level risks

	Risk description (cause, 'risk event', potential impacts)	Mitigation/Risk response (state if the response is done or pending)	Probability (1-5)	Impact (1-5)	RAG
1	The Scheme does not receive sufficient applications	Ensure scheme set up with long application window (pending). Promote the Scheme to wider range of groups	1	3	G

		(pending).			
2	Delay in opening the Scheme to applications	Agree realistic delivery timetable with Groundwork London (pending)	2	2	G
3	The Scheme does not receive high quality applications which meet the GLA's objectives	Effectively brief Groundwork London on the Scheme criteria (done) Draft clear application guidance notes about the aims of the scheme and project criteria (done)	2	2	G

Links to Mayoral Strategies

- 4.2 The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy includes an objective to increase tree canopy cover from 20% to 25% by 2025 (and a further 5% by 2050). This target is reflected in Policy 7.21 of the London Plan. The primary rationale for this increase relates to the potential for an increase in canopy cover to help off-set the predicted impacts of climate change; but it also recognises a number of other potential benefits including: enhancing biodiversity; improving air quality; enhancing local amenity and maintaining London's reputation as one of the greenest big cities.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Mayoral Decision MD 1429 approved £100,000 capital funding for increasing tree cover by 5 per cent by 2025. However the MD did not make provision for, or detail, the administration of the scheme. Approval is now sought for the Assistant Director Environment to approve payment of £13,770 to Groundwork London to provide the administration of the London Tree and Woodland Community Grant Scheme for 2015-16.
- 5.2 This decision also seeks approval for an exemption from the requirement of the GLA's Contracts Code of Practice to seek three or more written quotes in relation to the awarding of a contract, reasons for which is provided in section 2 above. Single Source Justification has been completed and attached to this Decision.
- 5.3 London Great Outdoors/ Parks and Trees 2015-16 revenue programme budget will fund this contract to March 2016.
- 5.4 As this decision relates to a contract with an external organisation, officers should ensure that the requirements of the Authority's Contracts and Funding Code are adhered to.
- 5.5 Any changes to this proposal must be subject to further approval via the Authority's decision-making process. All requisite budget adjustments will be made.
- 5.6 The Environment team within the Development, Enterprise & Environment will be responsible for managing this contract.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Sections 1 to 4 of this report indicate that:

6.1.1 the decision requested of the assistant director, in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code (the "Code"), falls within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the discharge of its general functions; and

6.1.2 in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
- consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2 Section 4 of the Code requires the GLA to seek three or more written quotations in respect of the services required or call off the services required from an accessible framework. However, the assistant director may approve an exemption from this requirement under section 5 of the Code upon certain specified grounds. One of those grounds is where the supplier has had previous involvement in a specific current project. Officers have indicated in this report that this ground applies, and that the proposed contract affords value for money.

On this basis the assistant director may approve the proposed exemption if satisfied with the content of this report.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

7.1 The work proposed above will be completed by March 2016. A continuation of the existing delivery model is proposed, with the GLA providing overall programme management and contracting Groundwork London to administer the grant programme.

7.2 A detailed delivery plan will be agreed with Groundwork London, covering the publicity, application, assessment, monitoring and reporting, claim and evaluation stages of the project.

7.3 Funding will be claimed at the end of the project upon completion of CGS projects and the provision of all required monitoring data and a final report.

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	(Completed) May 2015
Announcement	July 2015
Delivery Start Date (of CGS projects)	November 2015
Final evaluation start and finish (external)	March 2016
Delivery End Date	February 2016
Project Closure	March 2016

Appendices and supporting papers:

Signed Single Source Request (PDF)

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO**

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer
to confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Katrina Ramsey has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that the Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal as required, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

HEAD OF GOVERNANCE AND RESILIENCE:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:

Date: