

Case Study Template

Topic	Friends' Group – official status with the local authority
Name of Initiative	Getting Friends' Groups on to an official basis
Name of Local Authority/Organisation	London Borough of Havering
Related Topics/Issues	

Aims & Objectives To improve partnership working with Friends' Groups, to improve their representation, and recognise their contribution through an annual award and funding.

Outcomes & Impacts In the first year (2009/10) 2 of the 6 groups awarded Provisional Status in the Spring had made significant progress over the year and were awarded Official Status. As a result, LBH changed the assessment criteria to make it easier for groups to achieve official status by looking forward to what they were pledging rather than what they had already achieved.

Process

Friends' Groups were invited to meet 15 criteria:

1. Evidence the views of the Friends are representative of the local community through public consultation.
2. Agreement on proposed annual capital project/s
3. Hold regular minuted meetings open to the public (minimum quarterly). Meetings to be published on the Council's Official Friends Groups website
4. Evidence the group holds an AGM and elect committee members into post
5. Ensure that only members who have attended at least 2 previous meetings are permitted to vote at the AGM
6. The group has a constitution in-line with the Council's Community Regeneration Guidelines
7. Hold events that promote the park.
8. Attend the Parks Open Forum
9. Undertake fundraising to support the Friends activities and the park in accordance with requirements of the Management Plan.
10. Only undertake works that are in line with the programme detailed in the Parks Management Plan
11. Produce literature or undertake research that benefits the park.
12. Provide quarterly updates for the Council's Official Friends Group website
13. Work in partnership with officers from Parks and Open Spaces to improve the park
14. Represent the local youth within the community on the group's committee.
15. Provide representative to attend the Borough Friends Group Forum

The Council has to meet criteria including:

1. Provide the Park free of charge for Official Friends events
2. Provide Insurance for group's events and activities on their site
3. Annually agree at least one project to be delivered by the Friends to be part or fully funded by the award of £1,000 to be spent within 2011/2012. A report on expenditure to be submitted by the treasurer.
4. Opportunity to bid for an additional £5,000 capital money to match fund a group's project, unless the group has been successful in the previous year.
5. Draft Management Plans for each site and review them at least every two years (annually for Green Flag)
6. Work towards application and retention of a Green Flag for the site
7. Annually award each of those achieving the Official status with a certificate
8. Attend all Friends meetings (Monday –Thursday, providing at least two weeks notice has been given)

Resources/Funding £5 000 awarded competitively to one group for capital project. Each group is also given £1,000 for agreed materials, equipment or works to benefit the park/garden

Timescales Each activity required a plan with key milestones to be submitted

Evaluation See Outcomes and Impact

Prospects & Opportunities

In addition to the funding groups benefit from engaging with the community more effectively through consultation and events. This gives groups a better understanding of what the wider community wants in terms of usage and facilities. In turn this gives the Council a better idea of how the parks/gardens should be improved. The Council can use groups as a key consultee for projects as they represent the community. Groups can publicise themselves and the parks by holding more open meetings and and events.

This is also an opportunity for Council's to not only improve relationships with groups that meet the criteria but to help improve those groups that do not.

Key Learning/Advice for Others

1. Get senior officer and member support before proceeding. Any negativity from groups who do not agree with the initiative and especially from those who do not initially receive an award may be directed at senior officers and members. Having the full support of the Council, should ensure that officers are able to encourage unsuccessful groups to meet more of the criteria to improve the group and park.
2. Agree the criteria in advance with the groups. This was done in Havering by a series of Parks Friends Group Forums where officers explained to groups the reasons why the criteria were important and the benefits of the groups meeting them. Those groups who already worked effectively in the community and worked in partnership with the Council could give other groups the motivation to follow their example and achieve the award.
3. Make it clear that applying for official friends group status is not mandatory. The

Council will work with all groups regardless of status however due to limited resources those with official status will receive more support, e.g. time and money.

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Contact agrees that GreenSpace can publish this case study in either printed or digital media Yes No

Contact is happy for their contact details to be published with the case study Yes No

Other Information Sources