

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00, Thursday, 28 November 2013

Partnership and procurement arrangements with Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust

Item number 7.12

Report number

Wards - all

Links

Coalition pledges [P42](#), [P43](#)

Council outcomes [CO10](#), [CO19](#), [CO22](#)

Single Outcome Agreement [SO2](#) and [SO4](#)

Mark Turley

Director of Services for Communities

Contact: David Jamieson, Parks & Greenspace Manager

E-mail: david.jamieson@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 7055

Executive summary

Partnership and procurement arrangements with Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust

Summary

This report follows up the request of Committee, at its meeting of 31 October 2013, to provide further information on the uniqueness of the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT), with regard to regularising the relationship between the Council and ELGT. ELGT was created by the Council in association with other local authorities and central government agencies, and works closely with the Council to add value to Council projects and implement them successfully.

A significant proportion of improvement works to the Council's parks, play parks and green spaces are delivered by ELGT. Between 2006 and 2013, the Trust delivered over 100 projects on behalf of the Council using £1.7m of Council funding although the actual total value of this work was £3.9m. This is because ELGT was able to access £2.2m of external funding from sources that the Council is unable to access. It is therefore in the best interests of the Council to continue to work with ELGT and to take advantage of these additional funding streams.

Contract Standing Orders require work in excess of £25,000 to be awarded to third parties via competitive tendering. It is proposed to waive contract standing orders to allow work to be continued to be delivered by ELGT due to their ability to access additional external funding to the benefit of the Council's parks and green spaces.

ELGT is a charity and a company limited by guarantee overseen by a Board of Directors, which includes members drawn from the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian Councils. Currently Councillors Perry and Howat are the Board members nominated by the Council.

Recommendations

1. To note the uniqueness of the ELGT.
2. That Contract Standing Orders are waived to allow works to continue to be delivered by ELGT.
3. That a framework agreement is established that allow up to £1m of improvement work to be delivered by ELGT over a 4 year period (the £1m limit

is exclusive of any additional funding that ELGT is able to access on behalf of the Council).

Measures of success

Key measures of success for Council projects undertaken by ELGT are:

- Delivery of high quality projects on time and on budget
- Active community involvement in projects
- Grant contributions secured by ELGT over and above Council funds

Financial impact

The agreement would not guarantee any minimum value of works to be delivered by ELGT. Orders will only be placed by the Council when these are in line with approved budgets and where there would be additional benefits from the work being delivered by ELGT. The maximum amount of financial contribution from the Council towards improvement projects delivered by ELGT would be £1m over 4 years.

Equalities impact

The contents and recommendations of this report do not detract from the delivery of the general public sector equality duties. The work carried out by ELGT on the Council's behalf as described in this report does not infringe upon the ten areas of rights and makes a positive contribution to 'age' (facilities, information and resources are provided to help people of all ages learn about and enjoy parks and green spaces) and 'disability' (access infrastructure, play equipment and other amenities are designed as far as possible to be accessible to people of all abilities).

Sustainability impact

The work carried out by ELGT on the Council's behalf as described in this report supports sustainability objectives by: 1) enhancing the value of Edinburgh's parks and green spaces ; 2) helping to absorb carbon through the protection and enhancement of woodland and green spaces 3) enhancing the biodiversity of Edinburgh and the Lothians; and 4) protecting landscape and environmental quality.

Consultation and engagement

Consultation and engagement with stakeholders at the appropriate level will be planned as part of each individual project.

Background reading / external references

None

Partnership and procurement arrangements with Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust

1. Background

- 1.1 This report follows the request of Committee, at its meeting of 31 October 2013, to provide further information on the uniqueness of the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT).

2. Main report

- 2.1 The ELGT is the only organisation operating within the city that has a dedicated greenspace remit and commitment to the whole of Edinburgh. Council officers deal with numerous organisations in the course of their activities, but are unaware of any other organisation with this specialist remit.
- 2.2 Our research could not identify any other organisation operating with a greenspace remit that extended to Edinburgh. Certainly, there are other charities that focus on greenspace issues/projects in individual geographical areas outside of Edinburgh (e.g. Groundwork – England; Aberdeen Greenspace Trust – Aberdeen; Glasgow & Clyde Valley Greenspace Trust – Greater Glasgow), but their remit does not extend to Edinburgh. Similarly, there are organisations in Edinburgh that deliver greenspace projects, but these are geographically limited (e.g. Water of Leith Conservation Trust – Water of Leith; Greener Leith - Leith; Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association – backgreens).
- 2.3 There are charities and consultants that operate in Edinburgh that cover some aspects of what ELGT provides (e.g. The Conservation Volunteers - volunteering; Paths for All - access), but their remit is very narrow.
- 2.4 The Council has a long established relationship with Fields in Trust (also known as the National Playing Fields Association) whose role is to encourage the protection and enhancement of green spaces and playing fields throughout the UK. It achieves this through dedication schemes, such as the Queen Elizabeth Fields scheme under which the Council dedicated 24 of its parks in 2012, and through grant aid schemes. Whilst it has contributed financially to Council parks projects, it does not undertake community engagement or project implementation, and is complementary to rather than analogous to ELGT.

- 2.5 There are also lots of organisations that undertake direct landscaping works (e.g. Premier One; Glendale; MW Groundworks), but these do not offer a project management, community engagement, education, and/or external fundraising service.
- 2.6 There are consultants that will provide fundraising services, project management services, community engagement, and educational activities, but rarely within a single entity, and none that we are aware of vis-a-vis greenspace.
- 2.7 It is the collective package that gives ELGT its uniqueness, and adds such value to the Council's requirements. As far as officers are aware, ELGT is the only organisation able to bring together the necessary in-house skills and expertise within one organisation, allowing it to provide integrated services and project delivery across a wide range of policy areas (e.g. community health & wellbeing, education, transport, housing, regeneration and environment), community involvement activities, project fundraising, and start-to-finish project management..
- 2.8 As an independent charity, ELGT is widely recognised as a focal point for greenspace activity in the Lothians and one of its strengths lies in the diversity of partners represented in the Trust, including the city and other Lothian councils, national bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland, the health and social housing sectors, businesses, local community groups and individuals. With its ongoing involvement as a founder member and with elected member directors, the Council has had a close working relationship with the Trust since its formation in 1991. This has produced a very productive partnership that has enabled ELGT to deliver over 500 greenspace projects valued at £11.5m across the city and in the surrounding area.
- 2.9 Through its effective engagement and greenspace advocacy at a strategic level, the Trust has benefited the city by playing a leading role in developing and supporting national and regional partnerships, for example the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN), Lothians & Fife Green Network Partnership and Greenspace Scotland. ELGT is seen by CSGN as the lead non-governmental project delivery body in the Lothians in support its policy objectives.
- 2.10 The Trust is a valuable partner and joint working brings many benefits to the Council, both directly and indirectly. ELGT's position as an independent charity and well respected organisation enables it to operate as an 'honest broker' and facilitator of projects, bringing together the Council, local communities and other partners, especially in situations where long-standing difficulties have existed. In addition, in cases where the Council might not have the resources to undertake projects in-house, ELGT is a trusted partner that can be relied on to support the delivery of departmental programmes.

- 2.11 ELGT has developed a unique role and is able to bring together a blend of skills, expertise and experience in community engagement, fundraising and project development, management and delivery that is unrivalled and contributes significantly to the delivery of the Council's strategic outcomes.
- 2.12 A major strength is the Trust's proven ability to leverage 3rd party funding to supplement scarce Council resources. This might be secured from sources not accessible to the Council e.g. longstanding ELGT special relationships with funders such as private Trusts and the People's Postcode Lottery, or by providing expertise to the Council to facilitate grant applications to, for example, FCS's Woodland grant scheme.
- 2.13 This addition is clearly demonstrated by the value of projects undertaken by ELGT over recent years, a period during which the proportion of projects undertaken within the city area has increased greatly. Between 2006 and 2013, the Trust delivered over 100 projects in the city at a total value of £3.9m, with the Council contributing £1.72m whilst ELGT has raised an additional £2.2m from a wide range of other sources.

3. Recommendations

1. To note the uniqueness of the ELGT.
2. That Contract Standing Orders are waived to allow works to continue to be delivered by ELGT.
3. That a framework agreement is established that allow up to £1m of improvement work to be delivered by ELGT over a 4 year period (the £1m limit is exclusive of any additional funding that ELGT is able to access on behalf of the Council).

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Director of Services for Communities

Links

Coalition pledges	<p>P19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards</p> <p>P42 - Continue to support and invest in our sporting infrastructure</p>
Council outcomes	<p>CO10 - Improved health and reduced inequalities</p> <p>CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards</p> <p>CO22 - Moving efficiently – Edinburgh has a transport system that improves connectivity and is green, healthy and accessible</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO2 – Edinburgh’s citizens experience improved health and wellbeing with reduced inequalities in health.</p> <p>SO4 – Edinburgh’s Communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.</p>