



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Grow – Proposed Community Gardens funding requirement
Date:	9 August 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure

1. Relevant Background Information

Grow is a non-profit organisation which has a mission to build community partnerships by increasing and enhancing community gardening across Northern Ireland. Grow works to promote and support all aspects of community food and gardening to improve people's lives by providing a catalyst for neighbourhood and community development, stimulating social interaction, encouraging self-reliance, producing nutritious food, conserving resources and creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education. Independent evaluations have shown community gardens to be a very effective way of building community, sharing skills, transforming contested spaces and sharing space, particularly in traditionally divided communities.

The Council has an ongoing relationship with Grow and provides funding for the successful community gardens project at the Westlands end of the Waterworks Park.

In July last year Grow approached the Director of Parks and Leisure regarding an application to the Lottery for an Older people' growing project which involved programmes and the development of three new community gardens to support the project. The proposed community gardens are at sites in Camberwell Terrace Fold, Newington Day Centre and the Waterworks.

It was recognised at the time that this was a worthy project which the Council would be interested in. The Director wrote to the Director of Grow on 5 July 2011 and provided a letter of support to Grow to forward to the Lottery (Appendix 1 and 2).

	<p>It was made clear at this time both in conversation and by letter that any financial commitment would be subject to a detailed assessment of the proposal and the subsequent agreement of the Parks and Leisure Committee. A further letter clarifying this position is attached at Appendix 3.</p>
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2.	Key Issues
	<p>The key issues for the Committee to note are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No proposal was submitted by Grow prior to the budget setting round for 2012/2013 and consequently no allowance has been made for it in the Department's Revenue Budget. • In May 2012 Grow approached the Council seeking the match funding for the project and by that time the Council had agreed the approach to the Investment Strategy and had established the Area Working Group process. The bid document to the Lottery was provided by Grow at that time at the request to the Director. • As part of this process the only projects that are now considered by the standing committees are revenue only projects or capital schemes on council land. These projects are referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for agreement or otherwise. • In May 2012 Grow was directed to the Area Working Group process and the Local Investment Fund which seemed the most appropriate approach for the project given that it involves in addition to programme funding two capital developments on sites not owned by the Council. • The information on the Area Working Group process was provided to Grow having taken advice from the Director of Finance and Resources. GROW were provided with details of the process and the time scales involved. • Although Grow has been in contact with a number of elected members this project has not emerged from the Area Working Group process. • Officers have been involved in discussions with other agencies such as the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in an effort to identify other revenue streams to support the project. These have been unsuccessful to date. • The project requires the acquisition of Council land adjacent to the existing Grow garden. No formal request has been made regarding this. • An assessment of the Lottery bid will be given by the Director to the meeting.

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3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Finance</u> The matched funding requirement is £36,000 i.e. is £12,000 per annum from year 2012/2013 to 2014/2015. Grow's bid to the Lottery is for £200k. £170k for revenue, £160k of which is for salaries, £24k for overheads and £4700 for capital Works.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> No impact.</p> <p><u>Asset</u> There is no impact as this project is not on Council property.</p>

4.	Equality and good relations implications
	The project is aimed at engaging older people from all community backgrounds in healthy activity through getting involved in community gardens, healthy living and growing.

5.	Recommendations
	Committee is asked to consider this project and the request from Grow and give direction on the way forward.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Director of Parks and Leisure

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

8.	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 Letter to Grow dated 5 July 2011</p> <p>Appendix 2 Letter to Grow dated 20 July 2011</p> <p>Appendix 3 Letter to Grow dated 22 May 2012</p>