

Presentation –

Portfolio	Community
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Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership

Ward(s) Affected:	n/a
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Purpose

To receive a presentation from the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership.

Introduction

1. The Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership (BVCP) restore and manage the Blackwater Valley's Countryside to maximise its value for outdoor recreation, landscape, wildlife and healthy living by involving and co-ordinating the work of local authorities, communities and landowners.
2. It is estimated between 5,000 and 10,000 Surrey Heath residents benefit from the partnership annually but there are no exact figures.

Service Level Agreement

3. The Council has an annual service level agreement with BVCP, which sets out the expectation of either party in return for an annual grant currently standing at £10,000 per annum.
4. Within this year's agreement (2016/17) BVCP has agreed to deliver the following services:

A Strategic development of the Blackwater Valley

Work with partners, planners and leisure officers to increase public greenspace in the Valley including new SANG sites.

- Manage the Hawley Meadows/Blackwater Park SANG and Swan Lake Park SANG both used by SHBC. Produce annual reports for these sites.
- Review Blackwater Valley strategy and business plan.

B Community involvement

Organise and lead 150 conservation projects within the Valley for local volunteers, involving 1,500 people, at least 15 projects involving 80 people in Surrey Heath. Work with Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and site owner to carry out reed bed restoration project in Surrey Heath to contribute to Surrey Biodiversity targets

C Financial

Work to the partnership budget as agreed by BVCP members committee with at least £120,000 raised additional to core LA contributions. Value of volunteer activity in direct support of BVCP activities anticipated to be £150,000. Work to the value of £10,000 will be undertaken on sites within Surrey Heath Borough.

5. Ongoing monitoring of the service level agreement takes place throughout the year by Council Officers and Council Representatives. The Council Representatives on BVCP are Cllr David Lewis and Cllr Wynne Price.

Financial Sustainability

6. The Council values the work undertaken by our revenue grant funded voluntary organisations enormously. Despite the Council's ongoing commitment to these organisations, in the current economic climate no guarantees are available that the current funding levels will be able to be met in future years. The purpose of inviting our revenue grant funded organisations to the External Partnerships Select Committee is for Members to explore how the organisations are preparing themselves for future financial sustainability and what fund-raising strategies they are using to do this.
7. Unlike the other Revenue Grant Funded Organisations, the BVCP is funded through a formal agreement arrangement. At the Executive on 12 January 2016, it was resolved that:

“the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership be given 12 months formal notice of termination of the current arrangements in order to provide for the cessation or reduction in the grant should this become necessary in the future.”
8. This notification was therefore given. The reserves for the BVCP at 31/3/15 were £98,993.

Recommendation

9. The Committee is asked to consider the presentation and consider any future steps which Members would wish to recommend to the Executive and/or Council.

Background Papers: Revenue Grant Funding Application Form
Executive 12 January 2016: Grants to Voluntary Organisations Report

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