

**TITLE OF REPORT: BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND AND HITCHIN LAWN TENNIS CLUB**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Area Committee on the proposals to undertake improvements to Bancroft Recreation Ground.
- 1.2 To inform the Area Committee of the current situation in relation to rebuilding the Hitchin Lawn Tennis Club pavilion.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report does not contain a key decision and has not been included in the Forward Plan.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010 a report was presented to the Hitchin Area Committee outlining the actions of the adopted Green Space Strategy which include a programme to renovate town centre parks such as Bancroft Recreation Ground.
- 3.2 It was further reported that the Hitchin Lawn Tennis Club had indicated that under the terms of their existing lease they intend to seek landlords consent and subject to planning permission replace their pavilion which was destroyed in 2009 by an arson attack.

**4. CURRENT SITUATION:- BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND**

- 4.1 Groundwork Hertfordshire a registered charity specialising in urban regeneration have been engaged to complete a vision planning and community consultation process for the development and improvement of Bancroft Recreation Ground. Full details of the proposal is shown at Appendix A.
- 4.2 Due to the known complexities of the site, the number of groups involved and conflicting aspirations, Groundwork have identified senior, well experienced staff to run this project. The work is programmed to take place over a four month period starting in early July 2010 and completing at the end of October 2010 making the most of the better summer weather. Whilst Groundwork would like to start the work sooner the senior staff felt most appropriate to run this scheme are unavailable until this time.

- 4.3 Once this work is complete and firm proposals are in place Groundwork will investigate external funding opportunities to supplement the Councils Capital investment programme. However it should be noted that in the current economic climate external funding opportunities are becoming harder to source and it is important not to raise the communities expectations.

## **5. CURRENT SITUATION:- HITCHIN LAWN TENNIS CLUB PAVILION**

- 5.1 The Council as freehold owner of the land on which the Pavilion is sited, granted Landlords consent for a new building, under the terms of the existing lease. The Lease currently runs until 2015.

- 5.2 On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009 the Club applied for conservation area consent for the demolition of the existing building and planning permission for the re-building of the club house. The planning application and the conservation area consent application were both granted on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Attached to the planning permission are three conditions:

- The scheme to commence within three years under this application
- The scheme is to be in accordance with the deposited details
- A sample of the wall and roof cladding system is to be provided for approval

- 5.3 Like any new development, building works are subject to compliance with the building regulations and on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010 the Club made their application. A conditional approval was issued on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010, the conditions relate to:

- The adequacy of the existing surface water system to cater for the new scheme being agreed on site with Building Control;
- The disabled toilet layout meeting the required standard;
- The changing rooms meeting the required standard, should the standard proposed be less than the minimum normally accepted for use by disabled persons, then this approach must be argued within an enhanced Access Statement and agreed by Building Control.

- 5.4 Upon occupation the building is subject to on-going control through legislation such as the Regulatory Reform (Fire safety) Order and the Disability Discrimination Act. The Regulatory Reform Order will require a designated 'Responsible Person' to compile the necessary fire safety risk assessments and ensure the actions from these are carried out. Should a reduced standard for disabled access and/or facilities to that set out within the guidance under the Building Regulations be proposed and accepted. A 'Responsible Person' should ensure any actions from the Access Statement are carried out, compliance with the Building Regulations does not offer protection from action under the Disability Discrimination Act. This will be the responsibility of the Club.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Terms of Reference for Area Committees under the Council's constitution provides that Area Committees may act as a forum for discussion on matters of local interest.

## **7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The existing capital programme, linked to the Green Space Strategy identifies £35,000 in 2010 and £60,000 in 2011 for Community improvements to Bancroft Recreation Ground.
- 7.2 For the scheme to proceed significant external funding will be required to supplement the Councils existing capital programme.

## **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

## **9. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no human resource or equalities implications relating to this report.
- 9.2 The Council recognises the changing nature of equality legislation and incorporates national legislation and regulations into its scheme and services as appropriate, as set out in the Council's Corporate Equality Strategy. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 marked a very significant innovation in the legal framework. It placed much of what was previously only advisory and voluntary on to a statutory footing. The Act extends the provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976 to cover all the activities of all public authorities. It makes important extensions to public authority duties. Equivalent statutory duties have been created for disability by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and for gender by the Equality Act 2006. These duties divide into a general duty and specific duties.

## **10. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Leisure has been kept regularly updated.
- 10.2 Consultation with the community will form an essential element of the regeneration process.
- 10.3 Regular update reports via Champion News will be made to the Hitchin Committee throughout the regeneration process.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 That Members note the report and forward any comments on the proposals to the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure for their consideration.

## **12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 To provide Hitchin Members with an update on the refurbishment programme for Bancroft Recreation Ground.

**13. APPENDICES**

Appendix A. Draft vision planning and community consultation proposal.

**14. AUTHOR**

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**15. CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS**

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## APPENDIX A



# Bancroft Recreation Ground draft vision planning and community consultation

## PROPOSAL

Groundwork Hertfordshire proposes the following project plan and estimate of work to complete a vision planning and community consultation process for the development and improvement of Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin on behalf North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). The following proposal is based on a draft brief produced by NHDC, a previous site visit in 2008, a meeting with NHDC officers and subsequent email messages and discussions.

### **Suggested work programme:**

It is suggested that the following work should take place over a four month period starting in early July 2010 and completing at the end of October 2010 making the most of the better summer weather but avoiding key events in August. Whilst we would like to start the work sooner the senior staff felt most appropriate to run this scheme are unavailable until this time.

### **Background information**

We require to see the previous Green Heart Partnership report on the park, the recent Caldicott Centre proposal for the building and also would like to view any minutes that exist of any recent meetings or further consultation that may have taken place. Whilst information may no longer be felt to be relevant to the current position it will be important information for Groundwork and we need to be aware of such background for partners to be confident that we will be moving forward with a full understanding of their issues. If there is too much information to forward then we would be pleased to visit the Civic Offices to view the information and take our own notes.

### **Process**

#### Key stakeholders identified

To reduce costs but promote input and discussion we identify below how we suggest grouping the stakeholders to inform the consultation and design process by identifying current pressures, issues, opportunities and limitations for the site and the project as a whole. This plan will ensure that the consultation process meets the requirements of the client and establishes clear aims & objectives for the project into the future.

Groupings of the key stakeholders identified are as follows:

- Bancroft Hall users/Friends of Bancroft Gardens including the sports clubs. To be involved via meeting and consultation events. Also to disseminate the information within their own groups to facilitate maximum responses.
- Triangle & other residents groups. To be involved via community events.
- Local police community team, Youth Connexions, ESCOs & other agencies to be involved via site visits & consultation events
- NHDC officers - all departments for an initial visit/survey with ongoing involvement of key officers in a steering group, monitoring and directing the project - to be involved via site visit, steering group.
- General users of the park. To be involved via community events.

To be involved via:

- Initial site visit/meeting - NHDC officers from appropriate departments/themes (e.g. leisure and culture; community and youth; anti-social behaviour; disability; multi-cultural; planning; Local Strategic Partnership). Walk around site to gather information on pressures, issues, opportunities and limitations. **Early July 2010.**
- Meeting with existing Friends and 'building users groups' - as these groups already have involvement with NHDC regarding the site we recommend that NHDC invites all to a single meeting where Groundwork and our role can be introduced. With this all clearly identified Groundwork can then lead the process. We envisage this meeting again focussing on identification of pressures, issues, opportunities and limitations. **Mid July 2010-** date to be confirmed asap.
- Outreach session on site and at Bancroft youth centre to gather the same info from young people. **Mid July 2010.**
- Options - At this point we could send questionnaires to residents in Hitchin to ensure that we gather further background information or a more restricted leaflet drop to the adjacent houses or neither. Information could also be gathered via a display in the Market Square perhaps as part of the councillor surgeries if the timings are appropriate. Overall we feel that the varied membership of the Friends group and associated PR should be sufficient and as the proposal can take place without this work it is not included in the costing. However due to the importance of the site within the town you may wish to include them.
- Initial community event to be held on site on **7 August 2010** to display the information collated to date focussing on pressures, issues and opportunities, asking what has been missed and identifying ways that some of the issues could potentially be overcome. All draft information to be presented to NHDC officer group for approval before event.
- Feedback the results of the consultation to a further Friends and user group meeting along with draft proposals for improvement for comment. **Week commencing 6 September 2010.**
- Second community event on site on **18 September 2010** to present proposed vision for the site. Again all draft information will be presented to NHDC officer group for approval before the event.

Following the above process a brief final report summarising the process, results found will be produced along with a final vision plan by **early October 2010.**

### Timings

Suggested timings are given but you may know of other events planned which you feel we should link into in which case this can be amended. We have also assumed that the building will be available free of charge for the consultation events and meetings.

**Publicity**

Letters of invitation to Bancroft and Friends group to be sent by NHDC. Groundwork will produce posters & press releases at the beginning of the project and before the two consultation events. All text will be forwarded to NHDC for approval prior to distribution. We are also suggesting that we provide the opportunity to view proposed plans and send comments via our & NHDC website.

**Staffing**

Due to the known complexities of the site, the groups involved and conflicting aspirations we have identified senior, well experienced staff to run this project. Project management: Gill Taylor, Operations Director;

Main officer involved: Emma Norrington, Operations Manager

Landscape architect: Julia Watts, Senior Landscape Architect.

However to keep costs low, and as a local resident, a proportion of Gill's time will be provided free. When Gill is working with no charge she will be a volunteer and a further member of staff will be present at all times and therefore all work will be covered by Groundwork procedures and insurance.