

TITLE OF REPORT: BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND – REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the committee with an update on the work undertaken to develop a scheme to refurbish Bancroft Recreation Ground.
- 1.2 The report also contains a funding request to help ensure the delivery of the scheme.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report has not been notified in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Councils adopted Green Space Strategy lists improvements to Town Centre Parks as a priority and work to Bancroft has been included in the Action Plan for 2010/11.
- 3.2 The project is being managed by a Project Board which consists of the Chair of Hitchin Area Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, the Portfolio Holder for Environment, the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services, the Service Manager for Grounds Maintenance and the Operations Director for Ground Work Hertfordshire. The Strategic Director of Customer Services is the Project Executive and the Parks and Countryside Development Manager is the Project Manager.
- 3.3 The Table below details the consultation that has taken place to date:

Consultation	Date
Stakeholder meeting/ workshop with existing users to establish needs of Park	27/07/10
Public consultation event in Park	07/08/10
Outreach work with teenagers	Aug 10
Stakeholder meeting with existing users to review draft proposals	23/11/10
Public consultation event in Park to review draft proposals	04/12/10
Web-based survey of proposals	Dec 10
Outreach work with schools to review draft proposals	Dec 10

- 3.4 Appendix 1 details the proposals that have been developed from the initial stakeholder workshops and consultation with the public. These have been used as a basis for the second round of consultation which took place in December 2010.
- 3.5 The next stage will be to evaluate the results of this consultation and report the findings to project board in January 2011. A detailed scheme can then be produced.

4. PROJECT ISSUES

- 4.1 It is unlikely that the resulting scheme will cost under £500,000. To date we have secured £75,000 Section 106 money and are investigating if it is feasible to use an additional £90,000 Section 106 money originally allocated for a children's facility at Bancroft. Whilst the capital programme contains £95,000 for general park improvements and £150,000 towards the new multiuse games area, there is no certainty that capital money will be actually available to fund the project.
- 4.2 In view of the financial uncertainty it is important to explore every alternative funding option. Groundwork Hertfordshire will be applying for external grants and approaching local businesses for sponsorship. Although this may generate some additional income there will still be a shortfall. A request is therefore being made to the Area Committee for a funding allocation of £30K, from any remaining visioning or discretionary funds that may be available. Appendix 1 details the main design proposals.
- 4.3 The future of Bancroft Hall was raised at the consultation but it was explained there was a separate study being undertaken that is specific to community halls throughout the district. Therefore the hall falls outside the scope of this project.
- 4.4 Although the disused public toilets in Bancroft are not located in the recreation ground there is scope that the building may be of interest to a third party to develop a catering facility that both service the recreation ground and Bancroft. Proposals for the refurbishment of the recreation ground will be reported to project board later in January 2011. We will then have a clearer understanding as to if the building is required as part of this scheme. The Councils Asset Management Group will then be able to make informed decisions on the future of the disused toilets. Property Services have advised that currently there are no budgets to undertake cosmetic maintenance of this redundant building.
- 4.5 Until the consultation process is completed and the findings reported to project board it is not possible to identify other design issues that may be affecting the project.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council provides parks, pleasure grounds and open spaces under the discretionary powers given to it by the Public Health Acts, the Open Spaces Act 1906, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and the Local Government Act 1972. These executive powers are wide and additionally can be supplemented by the more recent introduction of the well-being power which enables a local authority to do anything which promotes the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area. The proper management of green spaces aligns favourably to the exercise of the well-being power.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Any future investment must be considered in accordance with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Business Planning process (efficiencies, investments, etc.) for 2010/11 and onwards. The value for money provided by all services will need to be considered and appropriate action taken in order to achieve a balanced budget in 2011/12.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource or equalities implications relating to this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Members of the Hitchin Area Committee have been invited to the stakeholder meetings and consultation events. The Chair of Hitchin Committee is represented on the project board responsible for the development and delivery of this project.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Hitchin Area Committee commits £30K funding for the scheme from their capital visioning and discretionary budgets.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To help ensure that funding is available to deliver proposals developed by the community for the refurbishment of Bancroft Recreation.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 All funding options are being considered.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Development Proposals

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

- Stephen Geach, Parks & Countryside Development Manager, Ex 4553
- Katie White, Corporate Legal Manager, Ex 4315
- Tim Neill, Accountancy Manager, Ex 4461
- Jim Turner, Properties Manager, Ex 4540

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 NHDC's adopted Green Space Strategy

