

INFORMATION NOTE: BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND

THE HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

1. BACKGROUND

At the Cabinet meeting of the 5th August 2014 a report was presented informing Members of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) decision not to award a grant for the refurbishment of Bancroft Recreation Ground and resolved:

- (1) That the decision of the Heritage Lottery Fund be noted; and
- (2) That a range of future options for Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin, be considered by officers, and reported back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

2. FEEDBACK FROM HLF

On the 29th September 2014, officers met with representatives of the HLF and discussed in more detail the decision not to award a lottery grant. Notes from the meeting are shown below:

- The need for investment in the park was recognised.
- It would be desirable for the opposition to the proposals expressed by local users and groups to be balanced by evidence of broad community support based on statistically robust opinion research.
- It would also be desirable to establish an active Friends Group or similar to show community involvement in the proposals;
- Reconsideration could be given to strengthen the historical aspects of the submission;
- Greater emphasis should be made on the restoration of existing features rather than new building works;
- Training and Activity Plans need to be strengthened and these activities adequately resourced;
- A re-submission of a revised scheme would still go through a competitive bidding process with no guarantee of success;
- Bancroft meets the criteria for the Parks for People lottery programme, however it has been assessed as being of medium heritage importance and Hitchin does not suffer from high levels of deprivation. A future bid would be strengthened by incorporating measures to engage disadvantaged groups in the vicinity and attract a wider range of users. In a competitive arena sites

with a high heritage importance in areas where there is also a high level of deprivation may stand a better chance of achieving a pass but this will vary depending on the quality of the bids submitted;

- A re-application could be made without a detailed Master Plan which could be developed as part of the Second Round process.

Following a Freedom of Information Act request the HLF have also made publicly available their case papers and minutes of their board meeting of the 24th July 2014 where the decision to reject our application was taken. (These are attached to this update note)

3. PROJECT BOARD

The Project Board established to support the HLF Grant and, if successful, construction phase met on 20th November 2014 to:

1. Note the decision of the HLF not to award the Grant.
2. Note the lessons learnt from the feedback from the HLF.
3. Note that in accordance with Cabinets resolution 37 (2) dated 5th August 2014 Officers are considering a range of future options for Bancroft Recreation Ground which will be reported back to Cabinet for consideration.
4. Note that as the project did not receive lottery funding the project will need a new resolution of Cabinet to proceed any further.

4. CABINET

Taking into account the feedback from the HLF officers have now considered a range of future options for Bancroft Recreation Ground ranging from do nothing to the re-submission of a lottery bid. These are being reported to Cabinet on the 16th December 2014.

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