

**HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE
12 JANUARY 2016**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the current situation for the delivery of incremental affordable improvements to Bancroft Recreation Ground.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 In order to keep Members updated the Chairman of the Hitchin Area Committee has included an information note on Bancroft Recreation Ground as a regular item on the agenda for Hitchin Area Committee.

- 2.2 At its meeting of the 10th November 2015 Cabinet resolved at item 11. *BANCROFT RECREATION GROUND, HITCHIN – FUTURE OPTIONS*

- (1) *That the programme of works proposed in the table shown at Appendix B to the report, to deliver improvements over a number of years broadly in accordance with an agreed Master Plan, be approved;*
- (2) *That the Council's urban landscape provider (currently Groundwork Hertfordshire) and the Countryside Management Service be engaged to project manage the capital programme;*
- (3) *That the following projects, as listed in Appendix B to the report, be included in the 2016/17 capital programme:*
 - *Resurfacing and rationalising pathways - £50,000*
 - *Removal and landscaping of disused public tennis courts - £35,000*
 - *Provision of multi use informal games area, subject to receipt of Sport England grant of £80,000 - £170,000;*
- (4) *That it be noted that £75,000 is already included in the capital programme for enhancements to the play area; and*
- (5) *That the option for car parking, as detailed at section 8.7.3 of the report, to investigate amendments to the existing Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) making available for purchase parking passes for limited periods of use, be approved.*

- 2.3 At the Hitchin Area Committee meeting of the 17th November 2015 the Parks & Countryside Development Manager provided a verbal update on the Cabinet meeting of the 10th November 2015.
- 2.4 The short medium and long term programme of works approved by Cabinet are detailed in appendix A to this report.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 Approved programme of works

- 3.1.1 Officers are currently working on site plans to show the short, medium and long term proposed improvements to Bancroft Recreation Ground as identified at appendix A. These should be available by the end of January 2016 and will be included on the Councils web site.

3.2 Water Splash Park

- 3.2.1 The concrete base, underground water jets and rubber crumb safety surface have been installed. The plant room has also been delivered on site and this will shortly be clad in timber. An application has been made to UK Power for a new 3-phase electric supply. Works are on target for an opening in May 2016.

3.3 Toilet / Baby Changing Facility

- 3.3.1 The order has been placed with a contractor to provide a toilet / baby changing facility that will operate during the water splash park season (normally May – Sept). Works are due to commence in January 2016.

3.4 Area Committee funding

- 3.4.1 The Hitchin Area Committee previously provided £26,403 Capital Visioning and a £5,030 Revenue Contribution to the Bancroft Project. At its meeting on the 17th November 2015 Hitchin Committee Members expressed concern that unless spent, this money may be lost in the future. The Committee resolved that the Strategic Director of Customer Services be requested to identify a project, within the Bancroft Recreation Ground redevelopment plans that could be funded by the Hitchin Committee and present details to the next meeting due to be held on 12 January 2016. This project is identified at 3.4.3 in this report.
- 3.4.2 Officers have identified that item 4 at appendix A (proposed work programme), "*The River Hiz re-stored with carved out natural banks and planted with rich native species.*" is currently unfunded. A meeting has taken place with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) and this project has been included in their work programme. The CMS have previously undertaken similar work at Howard Gardens and Norton Common in Letchworth.

3.4.3 The works will include re-profiling the banks of the river Hiz to provide marginal wetland areas that will be planted with aquatic plants. These will naturalise along the banks of the river Hiz. This will transform the water course from what currently has the appearance of an urban drain into a natural river flowing through the Recreation Ground. Appendix B shows the indicative design proposals for this project that was included in the original Bancroft design report that supported the Master Plan.

3.4.4 Finance has been informed that the Hitchin Area Committees contribution has now been allocated to a specific project.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 These are described in paragraph 3 of this report.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix A: Proposed work programme

5.2 Appendix B: Indicative proposals for River Hiz

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 10th November 2015 Cabinet report & resolutions item 11. (Available on NHDC web site)

Appendix A.

Proposed work programme for delivery of Master Plan (Priority: Short term 1 – 2 years. Mid Term 3- 5 years. Long term 6 years plus) as agreed by Cabinet on 10th Nov 2015.

Proposal	Recommendations	NHDC Funding	Other Funding	Priority	Impact on Master Plan
1. Reconditioned Bandstand with lawn and enhanced setting.	Recommend involvement of local interest groups including schools to refurbish bandstand and organise a programme of music events. Project could be led by Groundwork or similar body.	None currently proposed	Young Roots Lottery fund could provide grants of £10,000 – £50,000	Mid Term.	Existing pathway not currently being realigned so there is no scope to provide lawn area around bandstand.
2. Re-furbished Bancroft Pavilion with an extension for a café, community space, public toilets and sports club house.	Toilets / baby changing already included in capital programme & being provided in May 2016 to cater for users of water splash park. Explore funding options for refurbishment of pavilion	Toilets / baby changing £30K capital	Possible external grants available for refurbishment of pavilion	Toilets / baby changing short term. Refurbishment of building Mid / Long term.	None proposed
3. Water Play/ Feature as a heritage focal that attracts visitors and allow kids to engage and play.	Already included in capital programme. Work to commence in Sept 2015 and in operation from May 2016.	£11K capital	£149K secured section 106 contributions.	Short Term	Water Splash park will be more of a play feature rather than a heritage feature.
4. The River Hiz re-stored with carved out natural banks and planted with rich	Recommend Involvement of Countryside Management Service to undertake similar work as	Est £15K pump prime funding revenue / capital	Possible Our Heritage Lottery grant fund £10K - £100K or other	Mid Term	None proposed

Proposal	Recommendations	NHDC Funding	Other Funding	Priority	Impact on Master Plan
native species.	Howard Gardens.		external grants		
5. Natural Play Area integrated with the River Hiz. Enhanced and reclaimed ecology and biodiversity bring a new sense of character back to the site. Willow structures designed into the space as a heritage and play feature.	Improvements to Play Area previously included in NHDC's adopted Green Space Management Strategy. Existing toddler play area is in good condition and could be retained. Additional equipment for older children and elements of natural play could be provided adjacent existing play area. In the longer term consideration should be given to the refurbishment of the existing toddler play area.	£75K already included in capital programme	Possible small external grants to reduce capital spend	Additional equipment for older children and elements of natural play Short Term Refurbishment of toddler play area. Long Term	Expansion of existing play area rather than totally new natural play facility
6. Removal of public toilets allow for new entrance creates a promenade which opens the sites visibility and leads one to Bancroft Pavilion and the heart of the Gardens.	Currently disused public toilets are being offered for alternative use on a 5 year lease. Demolition of the toilet block and works to enhance entrance may be possible at a future date if funds become available.	None currently proposed	Possible future Section 106 contributions	Long Term	None proposed
7. Improved entrances and re-	Recommend shrub pruning and replanting is	£1K revenue	None currently proposed	Short Term	None proposed

Proposal	Recommendations	NHDC Funding	Other Funding	Priority	Impact on Master Plan
instated accesses to allow for visibility and pedestrian flow.	undertaken to increase visibility				
8. Refurbished gates at all entrances establish these important heritage features creating a fresh feel to the park.	Recommend painting main entrance gates and iron work at other entrances to help protect them from further deterioration. In addition provide over-lay stickers for existing signage to read Bancroft Recreation Ground	£2K revenue	None currently proposed	Short Term	None proposed
9. Reconditioned lawn spaces open up the area with new plantings and trees.	Recommend ongoing Tree planting takes place in winter planting seasons. Removal of over mature shrub beds to open up area could be undertaken on a phased approach over a number of years	Existing maintenance budgets for trees and grounds maintenance	None currently proposed	Short – Med Term	New trees and shrubs will be introduced over a number of years rather than in one planting season.
10. Reconditioned, realigned and new pathways allow for well connected routes and links through the park.	Funds not currently available to realign pathways but in the short term exiting paths are in a poor condition and require repairing, resurfacing and rationalising.	£50K new capital growth bid	None currently proposed	Short Term	Paths will not currently be realigned
11. Perennial planting beds re conditioned and enhanced with seasonal planting.	Surplus perennial plants from Priory Memorial Gardens have been planted at Bancroft. Could undertake a longer term	Included in existing grounds maintenance contract.	None currently proposed	Short / Med & Long Term	None proposed

Proposal	Recommendations	NHDC Funding	Other Funding	Priority	Impact on Master Plan
	programme of shrub renewal				
12. Removal of Tennis courts provide more green space for tress, perennial beds and lawn. Orchard trees planted in groves to tie back to heritage fee.	Work to remove redundant public tennis courts could be undertaken in conjunction with removal of Bancroft Hall.	£35K new capital growth bid	None currently proposed	Short Term	Planting of specimen trees rather than groves of orchard trees.
13. Bowls Green	Intention was to open up views of bowls green by providing railings. Recommend existing hedge is retained but at a low height to allow for improved visibility.	Included in existing grounds maintenance contract.	None currently proposed	Short Term	No railings in the short term
14. Realigned Tennis Courts with new fencing and connection to Bancroft Pavilion.	Recommend Club tennis courts remain in current location and informal games area is located on proposed site of realigned tennis courts (lower bowling green). This retains all formal sporting activity along the southern boundary of the site which was the principal of the master plan.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Club tennis courts to remain in current location
15. Informal Play Area	This relates to the multi use informal games area which is now suggested to	£31K Capital with external grant £111K Capital	£59K Section 106 contributions have been identified that	Short Term	MUGA located on footprint of lower bowling green

Proposal	Recommendations	NHDC Funding	Other Funding	Priority	Impact on Master Plan
	be located on the footprint of the lower bowling green. Total estimated cost for an informal games area is £130K, Flood lighting £30K. An estimated £10k would be required to develop funding bids and project manage works.	without external grant	may be able to be allocated to the project. Sport England Inspired Facilities may fund up to 50% of the project build cost (£80K)		
16. Courtyard space for café with seating and enhanced perennial beds allowing views to all activity areas.	Recommend linked into item 2 above for community group to seek external funding.	None currently proposed	Possible external grants available linked to refurbishment of pavilion	Long Term	None proposed
17. Potentially repositioned Tennis Club Pavilion.	Recommend Tennis Club Pavilion remains in current location.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Tennis club to remain in current location
Other Improvements not numbered on master plan					
New lighting along paths for increased safety	Recommend this is not implemented throughout the site but for health & safety reasons adequate lighting should be provided to allow safe access to & from Bowls and Tennis Club. In that the Tennis Club own their pavilion they may be responsible for this provision.	Est £2K revenue for security lighting on bowls pavilion	None currently proposed	Short Term	Limited new lighting
Increased maintenance	Recommend we remain with the existing standards	Existing revenue budgets	None currently proposed	Short / Med & long Term	Current standards to remain

Proposal	Recommendations	NHDC Funding	Other Funding	Priority	Impact on Master Plan
	in the Grounds Maintenance contract				
Training for individuals and volunteer programmes	Only required as part of the lottery bid. Recommend training is limited to that undertaken by Grounds Contractor as part of apprenticeship scheme and provided by the Countryside Management Service and Groundwork Hertfordshire.	Existing revenue budgets	None currently proposed	Short / Med & long Term	Limited training and volunteer programmes
New tree planting	Recommend it is undertaken as part of the existing tree planting programme	Existing revenue budgets	None currently proposed	Short / Med & long Term	Not happening in one planting season but programmed over a number of years.
Heritage interpretation throughout the park	Possibility of future section 106 contributions or external grants to fund interpretation or	None currently proposed	Possible Our Heritage Lottery grant fund £10K - £100K or section 106 contributions	Long Term	None proposed
Improved pedestrian routes	Recommend no new routes are provided but existing pedestrian routes are rationalised and maintained to a good standard.	Costs covered in item 10 above.	None currently proposed		Paths will not currently be realigned
Better inclusion and facilities for formal sports	Provision of a new informal games area will provide opportunities for a range of sporting activities.	Cost covered in item 15 above	Cost covered in item 15 above	Short Term	None proposed

Appendix B Indicative proposals for River Hiz

