

**LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE  
11 MARCH 2015**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**9**

**TITLE OF REPORT: NORTON COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015 - 2020**

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor P Burt, Waste, Recycling and Environment

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Norton Common is one of the most important open spaces maintained by North Herts District Council in Letchworth. To date this valued asset has evolved due to a long term vision high lighted in the previous management plans that has been successful in attracting external grant funding and empowering local volunteers to preserve and enhance this site for the whole community.
- 1.2 This report therefore presents the next Management Plan for Norton Common which provides an assessment of the physical and natural environment and the use of the area and sets out arrangements to preserve and enhance the area in the long term.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Members note the new Management Plan and support the recommendations that have been identified for the next five years.

**3. FORWARD PLAN**

- 3.1 The recommendations in this report do not require a key decision and have not been identified in the Forward Plan.

**4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To preserve and enhance the community asset and provision including the flora and fauna that can be found at Norton Common.

**5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Due to the aspirations of the Council for its Parks and Open Spaces to improve and deliver appropriate resources to its residents the option of continuing without a Management Plan is no longer appropriate. Therefore in this instance there is no alternative option with regards the continuation of a Management Plan along the principles and best practice and experiences as seen elsewhere in the District.

## **6. BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 Norton Common is a registered Local Nature Reserve (LNR) with 29 hectares of open space owned by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). The Pixbrook and several of its tributaries traverse the common with some rising from springs on the common. The site is the focus of a green corridor following the course of the Pixbrook through the town via Pixbrook Meadows to Standalone Farm linking with the Letchworth Greenway and the Ivel Valley with the Kingfisher Way path and the long distance Icknield Way.
- 6.2 The formal facilities include car parking, outdoor swimming pool (not included within the management plan) bowling greens, tennis courts, Skate Park and Muga (Multi Use Games Area) plus entrance signage and interpretation and surfaced footpaths throughout much of the site.
- 6.3 The key to the future preservation of Norton Common's recreational potential and to ensure continued maintenance is the continued support of the Norton Common Friends of Group and the input from external organisations such as Countryside Management Services.
- 6.4 The action plan identifies a number of aspirational elements which will require funding from external sources to deliver. If grant applications are not successful then these items will not progress to delivery.
- 6.5 The proposed Management Plan is in accordance with the Councils adopted Green Space Management Strategies policy for countryside sites: *'To support key partners such as Groundwork Hertfordshire and the Countryside Management Service to work with volunteers to deliver the actions of agreed management plans'*.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Area Committees within their terms of reference may "provide local input into centrally determined specifications for all services
- 7.2 An assessment should be made on each individual project as to whether there are any permissions or special considerations, which need to be taken into account prior to commencement of work.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial risks. If external grant funding can not be found the various elements within the current plans that are not completed can be rolled forward into the next management plan.

## **9. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no risk implications

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1 October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5 April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 12.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 10.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give **due regard** to the need to
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity) and those who do not (this can mean removing or minimising disadvantage; meeting people's needs; taking account of disabilities; encouraging participation in public life).
  - Foster good relations between those people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (such as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding).
- 10.3 This report provides an outline of the management plan, but in the delivery of that plan it will be essential to ensure that in the recruitment of volunteers, opportunities afforded by external grants etc, appropriate consideration of different groups and individual needs is made. This includes physical access, as well as opportunity to participate.

## **11. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, but an extension to an existing contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraph 11. However, at such time as the contract is required to be re-negotiated, Social Value benefits and implications will need to be assessed as part of that procurement process.

## **12. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

## **13. APPENDICES**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 - Norton Common, Letchworth – Management Plan 2015 – 2020

## **14. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **15.1 Management Plan for Norton Common**