

**CABINET
19 JUNE 2018**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

11

TITLE OF REPORT: GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - PLACE
EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR DAVID BARNARD
COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 10th November 2015 Cabinet resolved: That subject to receipt of a Sport England grant of £80,000 a new £170,000 multi use informal games area (MUGA) be constructed at Bancroft Recreation Ground.

In March 2018 Sport England made a provisional award of £60,000 towards the cost of the MUGA.

In April 2018 an additional £15,250 section 106 contribution was secured towards the scheme.

It is therefor proposed to increase NHDC's capital contribution by £4,750 to allow the works to proceed.

On the 27th March 2018 Cabinet resolved: That for Betjeman Road and Farrier Court play areas Royston, the Council allows a period of time of up to three months for confirmation of funding sources from third parties; and for Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth, the Council allows a period of up to three months to assess whether a business case could be developed with local community groups.

A funding application has been submitted to Brian Racher Trust to retain play equipment at Betjeman Road and Farrier Court play areas Royston for a period of three years.

In the case of Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth officers were approached by a local resident who aimed to form a Social Enterprises scheme to fund the retention of play equipment at both these sites. However this was later withdrawn.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The capital contribution for a Multi Use Games Area at Bancroft Recreation Ground is increased by £4,750.

2.2 By September 2018, subject to approval of funding from Brian Racher Trust for the maintenance and future replacement of equipment at Betjeman Road and Farrier Court play areas Royston, the Council will continue to maintain these play areas at nil cost to the Council.

- 2.3 For Symonds Road and Linnet Close play areas, if by the 27th June 2018 no sustainable proposals have been received, the equipment will be removed from both sites and landscaped back to green space. The Service Directors for Place & Resources to determine if any proposals are sustainable and could be developed into a business case.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For Bancroft Recreation Ground; To enable the construction of a MUGA at Bancroft Recreation Ground which is in accordance of the previously agreed master plan for the site.
- 3.2 For play areas; To enable the retention of the green space within the budgets available to the Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None listed in this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Green Space Management Strategy as adopted by Cabinet in January 2017 underwent a period of consultation. This included three focus groups and wide publicity in the local press.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 1st April 2018.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 Bancroft Recreation Ground

- 7.1.1 On the 10th November 2015 Cabinet resolved: That subject to receipt of Sport England grant of £80,000 a new £170,000 MUGA be constructed at Bancroft Recreation Ground.
- 7.1.2 Shortly after November 2015 Sport England closed their grant scheme which didn't re-open until 2017.
- 7.1.3 In 2017 Groundwork Hertfordshire were appointed to make a Sport England grant application on behalf of the Council.
- 7.1.4 In March 2018 Sport England made a provisional award of £60,000 towards the cost of the MUGA. This is £20,000 less than the amount previously resolved by Cabinet.
- 7.1.5 In April 2018 an additional £15,250 section 106 contribution was secured towards the scheme bringing the total section 106 contributions to £74,250.
- 7.1.6 To allow the scheme to proceed it is proposed to increase NHDC's capital contribution from £31,000 to £35,750.

7.2 Play Areas

- 7.2.1 On the 27th March 2018 Cabinet resolved: That for Betjeman Road and Farrier Court play areas Royston, the Council allows a period of time of up to three months for confirmation of funding sources from third parties; and for Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth, the Council allows a period of up to three months to assess whether a business case could be developed with local community groups.
- 7.2.2 In the case of Betjeman Road and Farrier Court play areas in Royston County Cllr Hill & District Cllr Hunter have confirmed their proposed funding source and have submitted a funding application to Brian Racher Trust to maintain the play areas and replace equipment as required for a period of three years.
- 7.2.3 In the case of Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth, Officers and Cllr Oliver have been in contact with the Chairman of a large Social Enterprise scheme who wanted to work with local residents to raise funds through a social enterprise to fund both play areas. However this offer was later withdrawn.
- 7.2.4 If no firm proposals are received from a community group by the 27th June 2018 which is three months from the March Cabinet meeting, the equipment will be removed from Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth. The sites will be landscaped back as green space.
- 7.2.5 It should be noted the existing play equipment at Symonds Road play area has come to the end of its economic life. If a community group is to retain the site as a formal play area the equipment is in urgent need of replacement.

7.3 The two most relevant decisions relating to this report are Cabinet's resolution:

- 11.3 of the 10th November 2015 *'That subject to receipt of Sport England grant of £80,000 a new £170,000 multi use informal games area (MUGA) be constructed at Bancroft Recreation Ground.*
- 13.6 of the 27th March 2018 *'That for Betjeman Road and Farrier Court play areas Royston, the Council allows a period of time of up to three months for confirmation of funding sources from third parties; and for Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth, the Council allows a period of up to three months to assess whether a business case could be developed with local community groups'.*

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The MUGA is to be constructed on the footprint of the redundant lower bowling green.
- 8.2 Officers have been proactive in contacting and assisting interested parties take on the responsibility of Symonds Road and Linnet Close play areas. Appendix A identifies the actions officers have undertaken since March 2018.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Within Cabinet's terms of reference are "to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council" and "to approve those major service developments or reductions which also constitute Key Decisions." The Green Space Management Strategy falls within Cabinet's remit and this project has been noted on the Council's Forward Plan as a key decision.

9.2 The Council provides parks, recreation grounds and open spaces under its discretionary powers.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 In November 2015 Cabinet approved the following funding structure to construct a MUGA at Bancroft Recreation Ground.

Source	Value
Sport England grant	£80,000
Section 106 contributions	£59,000
NHDC capital	£31,000
Project cost	£170,000

10.2 In view of the provisional offer of a £60,000 Sport England grant the new proposed funding structure is:

Source	Value
Sport England grant	£60,000
Section 106 contributions	£74,250
NHDC capital	£35,750
Project cost	£170,000

10.3 If external funding is secured to retain play areas at Symonds Road, Linnet Close, Betjeman Road and Farrier Court, the Council would postpone the £40,000 capital expenditure to remove play equipment and introduce natural play for as long as third parties provide funding.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The risks associated with green space sustainability were reviewed in April 2018 and updated on the Council's performance and risk management software.

11.2 Effective communication is essential to mitigating any reputational risks associated with the Council's recommended approach.

11.3 There is a risk that if the opportunity to construct a MUGA at Bancroft Recreation Ground, which has been identified as a key corporate project for 2018/19, is not taken, the Council could lose up to £74,200 section 106 contributions that has been allocated to the scheme.

11.4 If the MUGA is not constructed, an additional sum of Circ. £25,000 would be required to landscape the site of the former lower bowling green.

11.5 There is a risk that third parties may withdraw funding play areas with or without notice.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 An impact assessment of the Green Space Strategy 2017–2021 was included in the January 2017 report to Cabinet.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None contained within this report.

15. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Time line of actions.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

16.1 Steve Geach, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Green Space Management Strategy 2017-2021.

Appendix A Time line of actions

Date	Action
27 th Mar 2018	Resolved for Symonds Road, Hitchin and Linnet Close, Letchworth, the Council allows a period of up to three months to assess whether a business case could be developed with local community groups
27 th Mar 2018	Provided Mrs XXXX who had an interest in Linnet Close my contact details and asked her to email me.
28 th Mar 2018	Community development received email from XXXXX the Chair of one of London's largest Social Enterprises with an interest in taking on play areas.
29 th Mar 2018	As no response from Mrs XXXX obtained her phone number from Committee Section.
3 rd April 2018	Emailed XXXX with details of our play areas and arranged to meet with him on the 6 th April to discuss Social Enterprises.
4 th April 2018	Phoned Mrs XXXX as she hadn't contacted me.
4 th April 2018	Received call-back from Mrs XXXX she had had a recent bereavement so hadn't been in contact but she would pass on my details to a neighbour who would contact me.
4 th April 2018	Emailed Cllr Albert for any contacts for Symonds Road play area.
6 th April 2018	Met with XXXX re social enterprise for Linnet Close and Symonds Road play areas. He is going to look at available grants and come back to us with proposals.
11 th April 2018	Emailed Cllr Albert with contact details of XXXX so he could assist with contacts for Social Enterprises for Symonds Road.
11 th April 2018	Emailed resident who previously expressed interest in Linnet Close contact details of XXXX to assist setting up Social Enterprise for Linnet Close.
11 th April 2018	Received email from resident XXX thanking me for my email with contact details for Social Enterprise.
12 th April 2018	Received email from Cllr Albert thanking me for XXXX contact details which he has passed onto other Hitchin Councillors.
3 rd May 2018	Emailed Cllr Hill & Hunter for an update on their funding proposals for play areas.
3 rd May 2018	Emailed XXXX for update on his Social Enterprise proposals for Linnet Close & Symonds Rd play areas.
3 rd May 2018	Received email from Cllr Hill asking to meet.
4 th May 2018	Emailed Cllr Hill with suggested date for meeting.

Date	Action
11 th May 2018	Met with Cllr Hill & Hunter to complete application form Brian Racher Trust. They will submit application with covering letter.
11 th May 2018	Emailed Resident to see if he had had any updates from XXXX for Social Enterprise. Re Linnet Close
11 th May 2018	Emailed Cllr Albert to see if he had had any updates from XXXXXX re Social Enterprise.
11 th May 2018	Received email from Cllr Albert saying XXXXX had been in contact with him and was hopeful that he had found revenue funding and was working on funding for replacement of equipment.
11 th May 2018	Received reply from Linnet Close resident he hadn't heard back yet from XXXX re Social Enterprise.
21 st May 2018	Received email from Cllr Helen Oliver asking for update on linnet Close. Explained I hadn't heard from XXXXX who planned to form a social enterprise.
21 st May 2018	Sent Cllr Oliver copy of Linnet Close inspection report.
21 st May 2018	Emailed XXXXX for any update on his proposals for Social Enterprise for Linnet Close and Symonds Road play areas.
30 th May 2018	Emailed XXXXX for any update on his proposals for Social Enterprise for Linnet Close and Symonds Road play areas.
30 th May 2018	Emailed Cllr Albert informing him we had had no response from resident who intended to form a social enterprise to retain Linnet Close and Symonds Road play areas.
30 th May 2018	Received email from resident who intended to form social enterprise withdrawing offer of funding Linnet Close & Symonds Road play areas through Social Enterprise scheme. Copied to Cllr Albert
31 st May 2018	Emailed Cllr Helen Oliver to inform her XXXXXX could not form Social Enterprise scheme to fund Linnet Close play area.
31 st May 2018	Emailed resident to inform him XXXX could not form Social Enterprise scheme to fund Linnet Close play area.
31 st May 2018	Emailed Cllr Albert, Copied to Cllr Martin Stears-Handscomb & Cllr Judi Billing asking if they had any other funding proposals for Symonds Road play area.
31 st May 2018	Received email reply from Cllr Helen Oliver she had come to the conclusion XXXX wasn't going to be able to help with Social Enterprise. She will consult with residents and come back to me on Monday.

Date	Action
31 st May 2018	Emailed Cllr David Barnard update on withdraw of Social Enterprise proposal.
31 st May 2018	Emailed Cllr Helen Oliver reminder of costs involved in play area.
31 st May 2018	Received email from Cllr Stears-Handscombe asking for inspection report for Symonds Road play area.
01 st June 2018	Emailed Cllr Stears-Handscombe 2017 annual inspection report for Symonds Road play area. Explained much of the equipment was rotten and needed urgent replacement.
01 st June 2018	Received email from Cllr Oliver asking for inspection report for Linnet Close. Re-sent my email of the 21 st May that had report attached.