

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY 12TH JANUARY 2010
title: WHALLEY MOOR WOODLAND – CALDERSTONES PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
submitted by: JOHN C HEAP - DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: GRAHAM M JAGGER – STREET SCENE MANAGER

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To tell members about the progress being made with this project, and
- 1.2 To agree to recommend an increase in the grounds maintenance and play equipment maintenance budgets to reflect the changes that are being made to this area of public open space.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council's aims and ambitions
 - Mission Statement & Vision: -
 - An area with an exceptional environment and quality of life for all; sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
 - Council Ambitions
 - To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area; especially to protect the natural and built environment and ensure that we provide clean streets and open spaces;
 - To be a well managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.
 - Ribble Valley Locality Plan 2009/10
 - Children and young people.
 - support and develop the work of the Ribble Valley Play Alliance to highlight the importance of children's play and improve play facilities.
 - maintain and develop children's play areas.
 - Citizens Charter – Parks and Open Spaces
 - We will
 - cut the grass in our parks and open spaces regularly.
 - maintain children's play areas so they are safe to use.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Two parcels of land were transferred to the Council in April 2003 as a result of a Section 106 Agreement relating to the development of the former Calderstone's Hospital site off Mitton Road Whalley. A sum of £180,000 was paid to the Council by the developer Alfred McAlpine Homes North West Ltd as a commuted sum in respect of the lands future maintenance. The transfer was made under the provision of the Open Spaces Act 1906 in so far as the land could only be used for the purposes of public open space and for public sport and recreation

- 2.2 A report was presented to this Committee in March 2007 that set out the history of the site and subsequently began the process of arriving at the project being delivered today.
- 2.3 In conjunction with Councillors representing Whalley, a detailed questionnaire was produced and circulated to over 300 homes on the Calderstone's Park estate in order to gather resident's views on the future use and development of the parcels of land in the Councils ownership.
- 2.4 Having first presented the results of the questionnaire to this Committee a 'Consultation Evening' was held with residents of the estate in Whalley Village Hall on the 28th January 2008 following which a Calderstone's Management Committee was formed.
- 2.5 Groundwork Pennine Lancashire were subsequently approached and then appointed to produce a community based master plan for the sites taking into consideration the outcome of the earlier consultation exercise.
- 2.6 Groundwork held a series of meetings with officers towards the end of 2008 to agree the overall budget and funding for the project and terms of reference for their work with the 'Friends of Whalley Moor Woodland' as the community group became known
- 2.7 In early 2009 Groundwork produced a woodland management plan, proposals for the development of play facilities in the woodland area and held a number of activity days on site involving residents in various small projects.
- 2.8 Initial designs for the development of the woodland area were both not in keeping with the outcome of the initial consultation exercise and unaffordable considering the funds allocated to the project by this Committee and acquired from other funding sources. The scheme was consequently redesigned to become more of a woodland play facility rather than a new play area in a woodland setting.
- 2.9 At the meeting of this Committee on 14th July 2009 (Min 192) it was resolved that: -
1. the report be noted and the design proposals approved;
 2. Committee endorse the work carried out by the working group and agree to the implementation of the project subject to continued involvement of the Friends Group and available funding; and
 3. Committee note the revenue cost implications of the proposed works for future budget considerations.

3. ISSUES

- 3.1 A general clean up of the site has been undertaken at a cost of £5,800 improving the appearance of the woodland area and removing unsightly and potentially dangerous materials.
- 3.2 A survey of all of the trees within the woodland area has been carried out at a cost of £1,850 and the trees identified that either need removing or pruning in order to provide the network of footpaths in the woodland and the space for woodland play equipment.
- 3.3 The tree work was put out to tender and six were returned, the lowest of which was £5,200. The work was carried out between 16th November and 19th December 2009.

- 3.4 Including the fees paid to Groundwork for their tasks the total amount spent on the project so far is £32,500 including internal salary costs.
- 3.5 The most recent estimate for the whole of the project as per the latest amended designs done by Groundwork adding the ancillary work and design costs is around £210,000.
- 3.6 At present there is a sum of £75,000 set aside in the 5 year capital programme towards this project, with a £5,000 grant from the LCC Small Sites fund and £40,000 from the Big Lottery Children's Play Fund, a total of £120,000.
- 3.7 Considering the above there is at present £87,500 available to spend on the next phase of the project and over £90,000 to find to complete the whole scheme. Groundwork are currently continuing to seek further external funding sources to fill the funding gap.
- 3.8 The estimate for the remaining woodland play aspects of the project including footpaths through the site is in the region of £84,000 which is within the presently available budget.
- 3.9 The play equipment to be provided has gone through consultation and selection process and so can be ordered without the need to go through a formal procurement procedure. It is hoped that a substantial proportion of the remaining works could be carried out by our own Grounds Maintenance and General Works staff over the next 3 to 4 months. If not it may well need to be subject to a competitive tendering exercise.
- 3.10 The aim is to complete this phase of the project by April or May of 2010 in readiness for use by the community during late spring, early summer.
- 3.11 The question of the future maintenance of the newly developed site then becomes an issue in terms of funding and resources. At the meeting on 14th July 2009 members recognised the revenue cost implications of a scheme of this nature and noted that this should be considered as part of the future (2010/11) budget process. It is estimated that in order to maintain this new facility in good condition will cost in the region of £3 - £3,500 in staff time and up to £1,000 in materials annually from now on. This issue should be considered alongside the similar effect that the development of Salthill Play Area will have on existing resources.
- 3.12 The new facility will be maintained by our Grounds Maintenance staff who are funded from within the current revenue budget. At present materials for the maintenance of such sites comes from the £15,000 set aside from the capital budget of £50,000 for improvements to children's play areas. With this latest addition the Council now has 18 equipped play areas in the Borough.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Approval of this report may have the following implications: -

Resources

- As mentioned in the report there are financial implications for the Council as a result of this project. A sum of £75,000 has been allocated from the original commuted sum of £180,000 towards this the first phase of the project. The estimated annual revenue implications are mentioned in the report and can be

funded from the balance of the commuted sum still available. Staff resources to implement the project are very stretched under the circumstances.

Technical, Environmental and Legal

- The technical detail of the scheme has been agreed with drawings and specifications having been prepared by Groundwork Pennine Lancashire under the terms of their appointment. The implementation of the proposals now rests largely with the Borough Council. The available resources to do this are referred to above. The woodland area in particular will be improved considerably and made much more accessible to the residents of the estate. On completion it should be of significant benefit to the adjoining community. The Friends of Whalley Moor Woodland is, with the aid of officers from Groundwork, in the process of becoming a formally constituted group with its own constitution and elected representatives.

Reputation

- Bringing into better and more formal use this piece of woodland can only be of great benefit to the residents of Calderstone's Park and despite it being many years on from when the development took place the project should nevertheless enhance the reputation of the Council. The formation of the Friends Group if properly supported will create a valuable link between the local community and the Council. There will be a need to keep the new facilities well maintained in order to retain the reputation gained from carrying the project.

5. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Consider the impact of this development on existing work programmes, and

5.2 Determine whether the increased revenue costs identified at 3.11 be met by changes to services elsewhere or whether a request for additional resources should be made to Policy & Finance Committee.

JOHN C HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Background Papers - None

For further information please contact Graham Jagger on 01200 414523.