
REPORT TO:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	7th December 2011	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Mark Alflat, Director of Operations	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Zoë Sewter, Open Space & Community Development Manager, x5753	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Swadlincote Woodlands Exit Strategy	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Swadlincote	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 To agree the forward development actions for Swadlincote Woodlands as identified at Annexe A.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To apprise Members of progress made in regards to management and development of Swadlincote Woodlands and to update the action plan.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In September 2010, a report was brought before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee which identified a number of site management options to look at ways of reducing the operating cost of the site. Approval was granted to carry out an options appraisal and to report back findings to the same Committee in 6 months.

- 3.2 In February 2011, the Options Appraisal report was presented and the following recommendations were made:

1. That Scrutiny Committee approve the revised staffing arrangements, which result in reduced operating costs for the site and the extended duration of the remaining s106 funding.
2. That Scrutiny Committee approve the Management Action Plan and recommend it's adoption to Housing & Community Services Committee

- 3.3 It was agreed that progress would be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2011/12.

- 3.4 The action plan has been updated and is attached to this report at Annexe A.

- 3.5 The actual drawdown of s106 funds at the end of 2010/11 was £7,060, which leaves £50,773.55 remaining in the account. It is not likely that the drawdown for the current financial year will be higher than this amount as staffing levels have remained constant.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 At current levels of expenditure the remaining s106 funding will last until 2017/18. After this time, the Council will be required to fund the difference from ongoing revenue funds. Provision should therefore be made in advance of this to prevent a shortfall in available budget to adequately manage the site.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The site delivers against the following Corporate Plan Themes:

- Sustainable growth and opportunity
Contributes to the Economic Development priority by offering opportunities to provide training and job creation in conservation and woodland management to increase skills.
Enhancing the environment to attract inward investment into the area.
- National Forest and beyond
Promoting The National Forest as a source of sustainable and renewable fuel – by realizing the potential of the tree stock to become productive woodlands
Site for tourism – an attraction for visitors into Swadlincote
- Lifestyle choices
Promoting healthy facilities and lifestyles
Delivers against the Get South Derbyshire Active project – the site is an excellent venue for activities such as Sport Relief Mile, Health Walks, Bike rides and Orienteering. It also forms part of the Swadlincote Open Spaces walk.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 The site also delivers against the key aims of the Community Strategy:

- Healthier Communities
Increased levels of participation in physical activity across communities, through providing a venue for activities and organised events
Increased mental well being, providing a green space for relaxation and nature
- Safer Communities
Reduced occurrences of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage
Increase range of opportunities and activities available to young people through the Get Active In the Forest activities and community projects
- Vibrant Communities
Increased participation in community and voluntary action through partnerships with BTCV, Groundwork and the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
Improvements in the management of open space and local sites to benefit their value to people and wildlife
Promote and support The National Forest
An increased number of people taking part in cultural activities
- Sustainable development
Maximise the potential of The National Forest to support growth in tourism and the woodland economy

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The expenditure on ongoing revenue costs has been significantly reduced and will ensure that the funds set aside for the site management will last for far longer than previously predicted. The eventual bill picked up by the Council is also drastically reduced.
- 7.2 The new staffing arrangements appear to have had no reported detrimental effect on the quality of the visitor experience – we have received no complaints about the changed opening times of the building and site, or the quality of the landscape maintenance. Mystery Shopper site visits are carried out monthly and are not identifying any significant issues which can be directly attributed to the reduced staffing levels.
- 7.3 A number of planned investments have now been carried out and the site is starting to show signs of improvement. A new piece of multi-play equipment has been installed in the main play area, new entrance signage has been provided and a new Orienteering course has been set out.