
REPORT TO:	HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	5 th JUNE 2003	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	CHRIS MASON 5794	DOC:
SUBJECT:	RESTORATION OF MAURICE LEA MEMORIAL PARK	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	CHURCH GRESLEY, CASTLE GRESLEY & SWADLINCOTE	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS07 & 10

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members approve the submission of the restoration proposals for the site as outlined in the report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To apprise Members of the detailed elements of the submission, including key issues pertaining to the long-term management of the site.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the restoration of Maurice Lea Memorial Park is the largest amount of Lottery money sought for a project directly managed by this Council. To date, the different stages of the application process have been successfully negotiated and it is now intended to submit final development proposals in mid June 2003. The total value of the work, including an amount for the additional management and maintenance of the site, is £1.425m. The HLF are being asked to contribute £1.075m with this Council's partnership funding contribution being an amount in the region of £220,000. As part of the Council's forward planning process a total of £257,000 of capital and revenue funding has already been earmarked in future years to fund this project. If Members approve the submission, and the bid is successful, restoration works are likely to take place in 2004 / 05 with a completion date in early 2005.

4.0 Detail

Background

- 4.1 Maurice Lea Memorial Park, like the Council's other urban parks, serves a fairly distinct local catchment area. Approximately 16,500 people live within 1 mile or 12 mins walking distance of the site. This population is also growing fairly rapidly with 2 new housing developments in close proximity to the Park almost complete and other major developments planned for the Gresley area in the future.

- 4.2 Strategically, the Park is also very important because it forms part of a major green 'wedge' that now extends from Swadlincote Woodland Forest Park to Gresley Common and Maurice Lea Memorial Park and then beyond to the new National Forest sites in North West Leicestershire.
- 4.3 The first report to Members on the idea of attracting capital monies to restore and develop all of our urban parks was in November 1997. In simple terms the overriding factors in pursuing this objective were:
- Confirmation through community consultation, area committees etc. that the quality of our parks and open spaces was very important to local people.
 - Realisation, that in line with a great many other authorities across the country, that the quality of our urban parks had deteriorated over a long period of time to an extent that large amounts of capital were needed to restore them to the standards expected by the community.
 - The advent of the National Lottery and an opportunity to attract external funding to enable restoration / development work to be carried out.
- 4.4 In particular, the HLF's Urban Parks Programme provided an ideal opportunity to attract this much-needed capital. Initially, an attempt was made to attract funding to all of the Council's parks but unfortunately only Maurice Lea Memorial Park met the restoration criteria of the HLF.
- 4.5 The Urban Parks Programme has evolved into a multi-stage process and the Maurice Lea Memorial Park project has been successful in attracting HLF monies in passing through these stages. The process involved to date can be summarised as follows:
- Approval to carry out historical research into the Park.
 - From this the HLF approved the allocation of funding to produce detailed restoration proposals.
 - These were submitted in 2000 and the HLF awarded the project a Stage 1 Pass.
- 4.6 In awarding a Stage 1 Pass the HLF requested that a range of further development work be undertaken. This included options appraisal and the production of more detailed and accurate costings. Another important requirement of the award was that a 10 year Management Plan be produced for the site. In addition to making grant recipients adopt a more strategic approach to site management the Plan will also give an indication to the HLF that we have structures in place to safeguard any capital they may invest. The value of the Stage 1 award was £32,900 based on total project costs of £43,943. This offer was accepted at the meeting of Full Council on 20th September 2001.
- 4.7 Consultants were appointed to undertake the development work, with the project being managed by a team comprising the appointed consultants, a community representative, a local ward Member and the Facilities and Development Manager. The group have also been supported by a monitor appointed by the HLF and are working towards re-submitting the proposals by mid-June 03. If successful with the Stage 2 bid it is likely that work would take place on site during 2004 / 05 with the fully restored Park available for public use early in 2005.

Development Proposals

- 4.8 The individual elements of the revised proposals, together with detailed costings are attached at Annexe A.(where identified, detailed final costings for some elements are still being explored). Based on the consultation that has been undertaken at various stages of the process, the project team feel that these are the individual elements that should now be included in our re-submission to the HLF.
- 4.9 In addition to restoring the Park to pristine condition the proposals also provide an opportunity to address important management issues at the site. The restoration of the Park railings (which were removed for munitions during the Second World War) for example offers an opportunity to close the Park during the hours of darkness.

Management Plan

- 4.10 The plan, which is still at draft stage (but should be ready for Committee) looks at the following areas:
- management objectives
 - maintenance operations
 - staff
 - safety & security issues
 - community involvement
 - management review
- 4.11 In previous reports Members have been made aware that for maintenance only, the restored Park was likely to cost, at current rates, in the region of an additional £14,000 per annum to maintain. However, the key areas that we need to address are those concerning the quality of work (particularly for feature planting and building maintenance) and having a permanent staff presence on site (community safety). Again, these are areas of concern that have emerged from community consultation and have also been specifically identified by the HLF in visits they have made to the site.
- 4.12 Currently the Park is maintained, as are all of the Council's sites, by mobile gangs. There is a park keeper presence during the summer months but there is no presence at all, apart from football attendant cover on Sunday mornings, during winter. This means there is no real control by the Council over improper use of the site for approximately 6 months of the year. This improper use of the Park has a major negative impact on encouraging legitimate use of the site.
- 4.13 It is therefore intended to include in the Management Plan proposals to have a permanent, trained grounds person on site and park keeper cover when they are not available. The grounds person would be recruited from within the existing workforce and current-training programmes would be expanded to ensure that the required skills are available. The mobile gang, for some tasks would support the grounds person, but the key factor would be that they would be on site permanently and would take direct ownership and responsibility for what takes place in the Park.
- 4.14 These proposals are a major change to the way we manage and maintain our sites at the present time and have implications in three key areas. There are obvious financial implications and these are outlined below. There are also staffing implications in that any proposals to change working practices would be subject to detailed discussions and negotiation with the grounds workforce and DSO management. The final area, where there are implications, is that changing working practice in one-park impacts on how we do things at other sites.

4.15 At this stage it is not the purpose of this report to go into these implications in great detail. All that can be said is that it is possible to envisage a scenario where the additional park keeper cover at Maurice Lea Memorial Park fits into a 'mobile' warden system that could offer cover at our other Parks and open spaces. Once all of the implications of site-specific grounds people are worked through it is anticipated that both these issues could form the basis of a 'service development' proposal for location at Newhall and Eureka Parks in the 2004 / 05 budget cycle.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Following the development work the total restoration costs, including an element for maintaining the restored Park, are now in the region of £1.434m. This is in line with what the HLF believe to be realistic costs for restoring the site. The HLF will be requested to contribute up to 75% of total restoration costs (£1.075m), but there may be smaller elements in the project, such as repairs to the bowling green, that fall outside their criteria.
- 5.2 The HLF, similarly to other similar grant awarding bodies, like applicants to attract as much other external funding as possible, particular to projects of this size. At different stages of the development of the project other funding bodies have been approached about contributing to the scheme and have provisionally indicated support, subject to final project costs and the submission of detailed applications. Annexe B lists how it is anticipated that the partnership-funding element of the scheme will comprise. It should be stressed that just like the HLF award, that this is unsecured at this stage. The HLF have also indicated that previous grant aid support does not necessarily mean that applications for final schemes will be successful.
- 5.3 In realistic terms, to attract this level of contribution from the HLF, the Council needs to be prepared to commit at least a maximum of £220,000 to the scheme. This is above the amount previously anticipated, but given the scale of the project and the opportunity to attract over a £1m of Lottery money to the area offers excellent value for money.
- 5.4 A breakdown of the likely revenue implications if Members approve the submission and we are successful with our bid is outlined in Annexe C. This equates, over the first 5 years of the project to total additional revenue costs in the region of £128,500 (£25,700 per annum)
- 5.5 As part of the development proposals a detailed tree survey of the site was required. This has identified urgent work to the value of £*****. It is intended to carry out some of this during the autumn from within existing budgets. To fund the shortfall, and to enable the work to be carried out as soon as practicably possible, a development proposal will be submitted during the interim budget process (if it happens)
- 5.6 A one-off sum of £137,000 has been earmarked in the Council's capital programme for 2004/05, and a sum of £24,000 per year has been included in the General Fund Revenue Account from 2004/05. Although our revenue projections only look 3 years ahead at anyone time, over 5 years, the Council has effectively earmarked resources of around £257,000 (£137,000 one-off + 5 years at £24,000).

Based on the latest estimates, this is obviously greater than the £220,000 required, and this at the very least demonstrates to ourselves, the HLF and potential funding partners, that we can achieve our part of the funding package, particularly on an-going basis.

6.0 Corporate Implications

- 6.1 'Clean, Green, Safe & Active Public Space' as most Members will be aware is one of the areas included in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment that ourselves and other similar sized authorities are currently undertaking. Success with this project would send an important signal to assessors that we have a strategy in place for the improvement of our urban parks.

7.0 Community Implications

- 7.1 The project, to date, has generated a great deal of community interest and its success will make a major contribution towards the regeneration of the area.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The quality of parks and open spaces are often regarded as key indicator of the well being of a local community. If successful, the restoration of Maurice Lea Memorial Park will address many of the concerns local people have for the site and make a major contribution to the quality of facilities available in the wider National Forest area

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Leisure Services Committee Report, 15th October 1998, Community Services Committee Report – 7th December 2000, Report to Full Council, 20th September 2001.

