

FOR: COUNCIL MEETING
30th SEPTEMBER 2014
AGENDA ITEM 6
(YELLOW ENCLOSURE)

**REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF, LEISURE, PARKS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT
(OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs Tranter (Chairman), Mynott (Vice-Chairman), Tittley (Vice-Chairman, Bacon, Mrs Constable, Mrs Hancocks, Isaacs, Mosson and Pearce.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received from Councillors Awty, Yeates and the Cabinet Member for Waste Management and I.T Councillor Eadie.

(In accordance with Council Procedure No. 17 Councillor A. Smith also attended the meeting.)

ALSO PRESENT: David Dixon and Peter Buck from the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust.

At the meeting of the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 8th September 2014 the following matters were considered:

1. THE RESTORATION OF STOWE POOL AND FIELDS
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- 1.1 The Committee received a report on encouragement from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to submit a Funding Enquiry Form as an initial step towards submitting a full application for a grant to restore Stowe Pool and Fields in Lichfield. Members also heard about the current use and condition of Stowe Pool and Fields and how it is an integral part of the city's Historic Parks. The Committee noted that this area was included in the original unsuccessful bid for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the historic parks but then removed from the subsequent successful application because of budgetary pressures.
- 1.2 It was then reported that after initial enquiries of users and the Friends on the Historic Parks, a number of suggestions for restoration had emerged including works to the boat house and resurfacing of the footpaths. It was then reported that Section 106 monies of £45k and Capital Fund of £5K had been secured and therefore the 5% match funding was in place to apply for funding from the HLF up to the value of £1m.
- 1.3 It was also reported that lessons had been learnt from the previous HLF parks project and it was intended to have much more Member involvement including a Project Champion who would be the Cabinet Member, Member representation on the Project Board along with a high level of Overview & Scrutiny input.
- 1.4 The Committee were supportive of the proposal and felt that the area was of a high community benefit however, the following concerns were raised. Members asked how the Section 106 monies had been prioritised for this against other projects in the District and it was reported that process was to apply for S106 funding and the bids

evaluated by a working group. It was noted that external organisations could also apply for Section 106 funding and so priority had been judged against those applications as well. It was agreed that the Committee would be sent details on how and when the project was awarded the Section 106 funding.

- 1.5 Members then asked what the on costs would be in submitting an application to the HLF and if there were adequate resources to complete the project especially after a reduction in Officers. It was reported that some of the previous HLF award went towards financing Officer posts and it was felt that there was capacity for this project to be progressed especially as it was the Officers who wish to see the restoration take place. It was noted that a close eye would be kept on resources and if a problem was to occur, it would be reassessed.
- 1.6 Members asked if the local angling community could be consulted with as the area was used regularly by them and it was noted that Officers had already been in contact with them along with other organisations. It was noted that there would be a need to balance the needs and wants of the Council, community, the HLF and the requirement currently of the area being a SSSI.
- 1.7 Members requested that beyond the list in the report, the areas for improvement include the introduction of fishing platforms, the restoration of the boat house and the provision of exercise equipment suitable for older citizens.
- 1.8 It was agreed that the proposal to apply for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund be endorsed and the Committee's views be taken into account.

2. FIT FOR THE FUTURE: PARKS, GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND COUNTRYSIDE REVIEW - HOSPITAL ROAD PLAYING FIELDS
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- 2.1 Members received a report on the prospect of seeking a suitable and appropriate tenant for Hospital Road Playing Fields in Hammerwich. It was reported that the playing fields were jointly owned with Hammerwich Parish Council and had seen significant investment in recent years and now included a four team changing block and an extensive new play area. It was noted that the site also had two full sized grass pitches and two mini pitches.
- 2.2 It was reported that, under the Fit for the Future programme, it was proposed to look at reducing the scale of the Council's estate by transferring assets to appropriate and sustainable voluntary organisations. It was also reported that Hammerwich Parish Council had expressed its support for such action at the Hospital Road site and had already received expressions of interest from local football clubs.
- 2.3 Members asked why the lease would be for a minimum of 25 years and it was reported that a lease for this length of time would help the organisation that took over the site to bid for external funding.
- 2.4 Members then asked if there would be opportunity to have a Member representative on the board of the successful organisation as this could help ensure that the objectives of the District Council were being met. It was reported that it would depend on the governance arrangements of that organisation but it could be requested when the site was marketed. The Committee noted that the lease would be written in a way that would give opportunity to review if it were deemed that the organisation was failing to meet its obligations.
- 2.5 Members felt that public access as well as public use was an essential aspect that should remain at the site and it was agreed that there would be some controls in the lease as the Council would be the landlord.

- 2.6 It was agreed that that the Committee endorse the intention to seek a tenant for Hospital Road Playing Fields.

3. FIT FOR THE FUTURE: PARKS, GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND COUNTRYSIDE REVIEW LAND ON THE LINE OF THE LICHFIELD CANAL

- 3.1 The Committee received a report on the prospect of transferring land owned by the District Council to the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust in order to facilitate the restoration of the Lichfield Canal. David Dixon and Peter Buck from the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust were is attendance to assist the Committee.
- 3.2 It was reported that, under the Fit for the Future programme, it was proposed to look at reducing the scale of the Council's estate by transferring assets to appropriate and sustainable voluntary organisations. It was also reported that the Asset Strategy Group had considered the plans along with the ambitions of the Trust and agreed to endorse the proposal to transfer the freehold of sites Darnford Park as well as land at Darnford Moors and Fosseway Lane. It was noted that the Trust had aspirations to also acquire other areas of land at Falkland Road and Muckley Corner.
- 3.3 It was reported that the District Valuer had suggested that the land at Darnford Park could be worth c£10k but that the Council might consider a transfer at a peppercorn rent to enable the canal to be restored sooner.
- 3.4 Members asked if access and egress would be protected and it was reported that the Trust would be happy to it to remain unless there were safety issues.
- 3.5 Members then asked if there was a projected timeframe for the canals to open and it was reported that it was all dependant on funds and more importantly when they could obtain the land needed and it was noted that some of that land was privately owned. It was also noted that Trust had the intention to open the canals as a walking and cycling route before anything else.
- 3.6 Members asked how long it would take for substantial progress to be made and it was reported that this was a lengthy project and that in any transfer agreement 25 years was a realistic target. Members felt that it would be suitable to have a very long end date with the condition that if for any reason the project were to cease, the land revert back to the District Council.
- 3.7 The following was resolved
- (i) That the Committee endorse the intention to transfer the plots of land as stated in the report to the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust for a peppercorn but with the Council's legal and administration costs being met by the Trust; and
 - (ii) That the transfer also include the condition that the sites be maintained in a reasonable, useable and safe condition until the canal is opened and they should revert back to the council if the canal has not been brought into operation by a date to be determined.

COUNCILLOR TITTLEY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS HE IS A MEMBER OF THE LICHFIELD AND HATHERTON CANAL RESTORATION TRUST

4. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

- 4.1 Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme and Council's Forward Plan. It was reported that the Police would be invited to the January 2015 meeting to discuss ASB in Burntwood and at the Leisure Centre. It was asked if it could be the Inspector invited to attend. It was then reported that as the Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the Garrick Theatre was unavailable for this meeting, he and the Chairman of the Garrick Trust would also be invited to attend the January 2015 meeting. It was then reported that Bromford Housing would be invited to the March 2015 meeting to discuss grass cutting on their land. Members asked for a briefing paper to update the progress of the outcomes from the Dog Control Orders item and this was agreed. Members asked for a report on the possible future of Leisure Centres and facilities and it was noted that this would be part of the Fit for the Future service review and the Committee would be getting reports on this throughout the review. It was finally noted that there would be the Service Plan Meeting on the 3rd December and it was asked if structure charts for the service areas could be provided.
- 4.2 The report was noted.

Mrs H. Tranter
Chairman
Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee