

Report of: Director of Communities and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 20th September 2017

Subject: The development of a new park in Moortown and an update on the Parks and Countryside service apprenticeship scheme.

Capital Scheme Number: 32807/000/000

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Moortown		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. Leeds City Council manages almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space. This includes 7 major parks, 62 community parks, 95 recreation grounds, and 155 hectares of local green space, which include 144 playgrounds and 500 sports facilities ranging from skateboard parks to golf courses, and which play host to over 800 events each year.
2. In Leeds, community parks are particularly valued. There are 62 in Leeds – the second, third and fourth most visited parks after Roundhay Park are community parks. Nearly 61% of people get to the park by walking, with around a third walking up to 15 minutes to get there. There is evidence that delivering improvements to community parks has increased the number of visitors by nearly 13%.
3. In December 2013, outline planning consent was granted for the development of properties on the former sports ground at Allerton Grove. The site was in private ownership and had not been formerly used for approximately 10 years prior to the granting of planning consent for its development. A fundamental aspect of the development proposal was that two thirds of the site was to be dedicated to the development of a new 3.2 hectare community park in the Moortown area as mitigation for the loss of playing pitches. Furthermore, the section 106 agreement for the development provided for £300k in capital funding to establish the park and a further £200k contribution towards its ongoing maintenance.

4. The new park will include the following core elements:
 - A central North-South footpath
 - A circular perimeter footpath
 - Play facilities
 - Seating areas
 - A wetland area
 - New planting
5. Many of the core design objectives for the site respond directly to the challenges associated with the modern management of good quality greenspace and in doing so will support in adapting to climate change and will therefore meet the Leeds Quality Park standard.
6. The development of a new community park in Moortown provides the opportunity and resource to consider a linked expansion of the existing apprenticeship programme within the Parks and Countryside service and furthermore provides an opportunity to utilise the development of the site and its maintenance to support skills development. It is anticipated that the revenue funding linked to the ongoing maintenance of the park will enable the extension of opportunities for apprentice recruitment with the potential for a further 6 appointments to be supported over the next 5 year period.
7. The establishment of a new park will support the Best Council Plan 2017/18 priorities relating to health and wellbeing by supporting healthy lifestyles and by providing opportunities for Leeds residents to enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts.

Recommendations

1. Executive Board is requested to:
 - i) Authorise the injection with authority to spend of £300k to be fully funded from section 106 monies to support the development a new community park in Moortown.
 - ii) Note the future commitment of a further £200k investment to support in the ongoing maintenance of the site and the potential for this to support the continued expansion of the Parks and Countryside services apprenticeship programme.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to briefly highlight the value of community greenspaces in Leeds and how funding from development has been used to support in facilitating the improvement and enhancement of the quality of existing greenspaces.
- 1.2 The report will then go on to highlight proposals for the establishment of a new park in Moortown, which is to be transferred into the control of the local authority and will be developed and maintained by the Parks and Countryside service.
- 1.3 The report will request that Executive Board approve the injection with authority to spend of £300k from section 106 funding to enable the parks the development. Furthermore, the report will highlight the potential to support the continued expansion of the Parks and Countryside services apprenticeship programme linked with the ongoing management and maintenance of the park.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Leeds City Council manages almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space. This includes 7 major parks, 62 community parks, 95 recreation grounds, and 155 hectares of local green space, which include 144 playgrounds and 500 sports facilities ranging from skateboard parks to golf courses, and which play host to over 800 events each year.
- 2.2 In Leeds, community parks are particularly valued. There are 62 in Leeds – the second, third and fourth most visited parks after Roundhay Park are community parks. Nearly 61% of people get to the park by walking with around a third walking up to 15 minutes to get there. There is evidence that delivering improvements to community parks has increased the number of visitors by nearly 13%.
- 2.3 A key aim of the Parks and Green Space strategy endorsed by Executive Board in 2009 is the aspiration for all community parks to meet the Green Flag standard for field based assessment by 2020. This target was then built into the delegation of investment decisions concerning parks and green space to community committees by Executive Board in March 2015. From the latest assessment in 2016, 41 out of the 63 community parks reached the standard (65%) against a target of 73%, compared to only 22% in 2006 when the strategy was being prepared.
- 2.4 A key factor in achieving the green flag standard is capital investment to ensure that recreation facilities are updated and renewed along with ensuring parks infrastructure such as paths, benches and fences are sustained. One of the main sources of funding to support capital investment in parks and greenspaces has been developer contributions delivered through section S106 agreements.
- 2.5 In December 2013, outline planning consent was granted for the development of properties on the former sports ground at Allerton Grove. The site was in private ownership and had not been formally used for approximately 10 years prior to the granting of planning consent for its development. A fundamental aspect of the development proposal was that two thirds of the site was to be dedicated to the development of a new 3.2 hectare community park in the Moortown area as mitigation for the loss of playing pitches. Furthermore, the section 106 agreement for

the development provided for £300k in capital funding to establish the park and a further £200k contribution towards its ongoing maintenance.

- 2.6 Following that initial outline consent, in August 2014 North and East Plans Panel approved a reserved matters application which included plans highlighting the detailed layout of the park. There was a modest material impact on the greenspace resulting from additional arising's generated from the residential development and therefore a slightly revised planning application for the park was submitted and approved in June 2017.

3 Main issues

3.1 Design Proposals and Full Scheme Description.

- 3.1.1 A copy of the park design is included in the appendices of this report. The new park will include the following core elements:

- A central North-South footpath
- A circular perimeter footpath
- Play facilities
- Seating areas
- A wetland area
- New planting

- 3.1.2 The core design objectives for the park are encapsulated in the four broad headings below:

Maintain the natural appearance of the park

- Retaining existing tree planting and the feel of being in open parkland.
- The maintenance regime will be naturalistic in that grass mowing will be relaxed which will be interspersed with some areas of closely mown grass for sport and recreation. The establishment of a relaxed naturalistic maintenance regime will reduce energy requirements for grass cutting given there will be with fewer cuts along with the added benefit of positive impacts on biodiversity through the provision of beneficial habitats.
- Areas of wildflower will be developed to further complement the naturalistic management regime.

Working with and improving ecology

- Planting will be compatible with existing vegetation onsite and will seek to encourage a biodiverse parkland setting.
- The establishment of a wetland area will provide a sustainable drainage solution as well as new ecological habitat. The wetland will consist of grass and rush planting, which will further support enhanced biodiversity on site.

Space for People

- Well defined paths and the establishment of distinct areas for activities within the park will provide flexibility on how the site is used by the local community.
- Path networks will allow visitors to travel through different areas i.e. play space and wetland areas, creating a variety of spaces with differing amenity value.

- New signage will be developed that bolsters the feeling of being in a welcoming community space, whilst also providing a narrative that guides people through the site and its features.

Development of onsite play facilities

- A central feature of the park will be the play area which acts as focal point for the park.
- The play concept is designed to provide natural play features that encourage interaction with new and existing areas of planting along with the broader parkland landscape.
- In addition to natural play options, the site will include traditional features such as slides and swings.

- 3.1.3 In April 2017, the Parks and Countryside service outlined to Executive Board changes to the Green Flag Award® scheme which sets the national benchmark standard for the management of publicly accessible, well managed parks and green spaces. 'Raising the Standard' - the Green Flag Award, set out proposals to amend assessments to provide recognition of the role parks can play in adapting to climate change. Many of the core design objectives highlighted above respond directly to the challenges for the modern management of good quality greenspace and it is anticipated that Moortown Park will become one of the city's Leeds Quality Parks.
- 3.1.4 Consideration has been given to the longer term maintenance of the site and this was a central consideration in the discussion between the authority and the developer when forming detailed design proposals for the park. Inclusive within the section 106 agreement is a greenspace contribution of £200k that is to be used to support the maintenance of the site and this is payable upon completion of the park.
- 3.1.5 This fund is intended to support the integration of maintenance of this site into the holistic asset portfolio for the whole of the Parks and Countryside service. Upon completion of the parks development this will include provision for undertaking maintenance operations, associated costs including materials, plant and equipment, and skilled labour relating to horticultural maintenance, arboriculture work and specialist tasks such as the maintenance of play equipment.
- 3.1.6 Like other services within the authority, the Parks and Countryside service is committed to ensuring it has a multi skilled workforce with the requisite skills to maintain existing assets whilst also being able to respond to new and emerging challenges. In March 2012, the Parks and Countryside Service sought approval from Executive Board to support the planned development of an apprenticeship scheme to help sustain a diverse and skilled workforce. The objective was to ensure that future employees have the skills to plan, design, manage and maintain parks and green space in Leeds, as well as ability to work with volunteers and manage events safely.
- 3.1.7 The development of a new community park in Moortown provides the opportunity and resource to consider a linked expansion of the existing apprenticeship programme. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to utilise the development of the site and its maintenance to support with skill development within the service's existing apprenticeship cohort.

3.1.8 Since the report to Executive Board, the proactive recruitment and development of apprentices has meant the service has been able to manage strategic issues associated with an aging workforce and skill development as well the ongoing challenges of managing workforce transition. Consequently the service can report the following successes:

- 57 apprentice opportunities created
- 87% of those appointed have been retained and integrated into the service in a full time position
- 100% of retained apprentices have been successful in completing an NVQ level 2
- 15 members of staff have been supported in their continued development and have gone on to be successful in attaining an NVQ level 3
- Partners such as Path Yorkshire have been engaged to support with recruitment to apprentice positions in order to raise awareness of employment opportunities within the green environment for under-represented groups

3.1.9 It is anticipated that the revenue funding linked to the ongoing maintenance of the park can enable the extension of opportunities for apprentice recruitment in the service, with the potential for a further 6 appointments to be supported over the next 5 year period. In addition, existing apprentices and new ones recruited to the programme will have the opportunity to learn from the development of a new green space which includes varying areas of amenity space established using sustainable development principles.

3.1.10 In April 2017, Executive Board was updated on the introduction of an Apprenticeship Levy and the Department for Education target for public sector bodies to employ 2.3% of the workforce as apprentices. Further recruitment of apprentices by the Parks and Countryside Service will support in meeting corporate targets for apprenticeship recruitment. Furthermore, the levy funds can be used to support apprenticeship training and end-point assessment in line with the corporate approach.

3.2 Programme

3.2.1 The high level programme for the delivery of the park is provided below:

October 2017	-	Site establishment
November 2017	-	Commencement of hard landscaping and arboriculture work
March 2018	-	Completion of hard landscaping and commencement of soft landscaping and site establishment
June 2018	-	Completion of project

3.3 Procurement

3.3.1 The construction proposed in this development is landscape related works and therefore falls within the provisions of Contract Procedures Rules (CPR) 3.1.4 in that an internal service provider (ISP) exists and has confirmed that they can carry out the works. Therefore the work is to be undertaken by Parks and Countryside who will act as a principal contractor.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The rationale and support for the principle of developing a park in this location has been the subject of extensive consultation and dialogue through the planning process. This included a public consultation event prior to the submission of the outline planning application, in addition to the consultation and feedback received as part of the application process. As outlined in other areas of the report, it has been necessary to resubmit the detailed design of the park for planning in 2017, which has provided an opportunity for more recent public consultation and feedback.
- 4.1.2 The process of moving from the inception of the parks establishment, (through outline planning consent, then a reserved matters application that provided detailed proposals for the parks development, before finally a more recent planning application for amendments to the parks land form) has been a lengthy process involving numerous discussion between 2013 and June 2017. Consequently, there has been notable public engagement, support, interest and indeed some challenge to aspects of the development of the site.
- 4.1.3 Officers from the Parks and Countryside Service worked with the developer in forming their detailed design for the park and have sought to work with stakeholders and elected members to establish a 'friends of' group for the park in advance of its development. The benefit of establishing such a group is that this would provide a vehicle for constructive ongoing dialogue between parks users and the authority whilst at the same establishing a representative body for the community. Whilst meetings of this group have taken place, further work is needed following commencement of work on site to develop and embed this group and to improve the frequency of meetings. The objective being that the friends of groups becomes an integral part of the park's management moving forward.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 An equality impact screening has been completed in relation to the reports content and the proposed decisions being taken within this report.
- 4.2.2 Once completed, Moortown Park will be accessible for wheelchairs with key infrastructure such as the central access paths and the play paths being constructed from smooth material and on an accessible gradient. Equally, the areas where members of the public may dwell such as the toddler play area will be step free with flush kerbs. Furthermore, the play area has been designed to be as accessible as possible and will include some play equipment with inclusive play value.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 This project complies with various Council policies and strategies relevant to improving the city and overall level of service provision. The main documents are referred to below:

- 4.3.2 The Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 sets out a revised vision for the city with the specific objective for Leeds to be the best city in the UK by 2030. In establishing this vision one of the top priorities to emerge from consultation was for the city to be a cleaner, greener city. Aspects of this priority can be found in all of the areas in which the vision is intended to make a difference, although specific reference can be made to the commitment within the vision for Leeds to be the best city to live with good green spaces where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life. Developing this capital project will unquestionably enhance the city's green infrastructure and will benefit those immediate communities and residents who will utilise this park as a community green space.
- 4.3.3 The proposals contained in this report contribute to the Best Council Plan ambition of becoming a more efficient and enterprising council. The establishment of a new park also supports the Best Council Plan 2017/18 priorities relating to health and wellbeing by supporting healthy lifestyles and by providing opportunities for Leeds residents to enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The Parks and Countryside service is diverse, and whilst the core service is delivered in-house, there is an income target for parks operations of £4.5 million which is delivered mainly through grant funded and/or S106 development works spread across approximately 70 separate schemes each year.
- 4.4.2 The capital funding used to support the development of the new greenspace is fully funded from section 106 developer contributions and will be delivered in house by the Parks and Countryside service.

4.5 Capital Funding and Cash Flow.

Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2017 £000's	FORECAST				
			2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's	2019/20 £000's	2020/21 £000's	2021 ON £000's
LAND (1)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
CONSTRUCTION (3)	300.0		300.0	0.0			
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
OTHER COSTS (6)& (7)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
TOTALS	300.0	0.0	300.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2017 £000's	FORECAST				
			2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's	2019/20 £000's	2020/21 £000's	2021 ON £000's
S106 Funding	300.0		300.0 0.0	0.0			
Total Funding	300.0	0.0	300.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Balance / Shortfall =	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

4.5.1 Revenue Effects.

- 4.5.1. The annual cost for maintenance of the park has been considered in detail. As highlighted in the main section of the report, the revenue costs associated with the

maintenance of the park will be fully funded from section 106 monies. Recruitment and labour resource required to sustain the park will be linked to the deployment of apprentice resource within the Parks and Countryside service. It would be anticipated that this funding could support the recruitment of 6 additional apprentices over a five year period subsequent to which the ongoing maintenance of the site will be absorbed into the broader portfolio of assets that are maintained by the Parks and Countryside service.

REVENUE EFFECTS	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 and SUBSEQUENT YEARS £000'S
EMPLOYEES	20.0	20.0
PREMISES COSTS	5.0	5.0
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	5.0	5.0

4.6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.6.1 The decisions requested in this report are eligible for call-in, in line with the Council's Executive & Decision Making Procedure Rules. Developer contributions in this instance are secured by a legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) between the local planning authority and developer. Furthermore, the terms of transfer are also stated within the legal agreement between the developer and the authority as is the legal commitment to layout the park as planning gain linked to residential development.

4.7 Risk Management

- 4.7.1 Elements of this project that relate to specialist aspects of landscape development will be managed and implemented by the Parks and Countryside service with due regard given to risk management through project governance. The service has extensive and varied expertise in acting as principal contractor in the construction of landscape projects including the redevelopment of Middleton Park following Heritage Lottery Fund investment, the landscape work associated with the development of the service's new horticultural nursery at Whinmoor and other similar schemes of this scale. Therefore the service can demonstrate the requisite experience to manage a development of this nature, along with the specific site knowledge to successfully implement this scheme.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Good quality greenspace can have a positive impact by improving the quality of life and health of those living close by. Community Parks in Leeds are very well used and contributions from development have had a significant impact in sustaining and enhancing the quality of existing provision.
- 5.2 Residential development on the land at the former sports ground at Allerton Grove in Moortown, have generated section 106 capital funding contribution of £300k that the Parks and Countryside service will utilise to establish a new park that conforms to the design determined from a lengthy and engaged planning process.

- 5.3 Revenue contributions from the same development will provide an opportunity to support and develop the Parks and Countryside service's apprenticeship programme through the recruitment and subsequent deployment of apprentices on the site as part of an experienced multi-skilled area based maintenance team.

6. **Recommendations**

Executive Board is requested to:

- i) Authorise the injection with authority to spend of £300k to be fully funded from section 106 monies to support the development a new park in Moortown.
- ii) Note the future commitment of a further £200k investment to support in the ongoing maintenance of the site and the potential for this to support the continued expansion of the Parks and Countryside services apprenticeship programme.

7. Background documents¹ - None

Appendices – Appendix 1 Location and site plan

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.