

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 20th January 2014

Report of: Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets)

Title: Update on the progress of Cassiobury Park HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) Project and to approve final stage 2 submission & budget

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 The report is to update Cabinet on the progress of the Cassiobury Park project leading towards a Round 2 submission to the HLF/BIG 'Parks for People' programme in February 2014. The designs and associated plans for Cassiobury Park have developed and progressed since Round 1 and a decision to approve the final editions prior to submission is sought. The report outlines the design proposals in the park for both Landscape and Building works, related capital costs, proposed management & maintenance structure and associated costs and phased programme for construction.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1
1. To approve the designs and plans presented for Cassiobury Park – see Appendix A.
 2. To recommend to Council approval to increase the capital allocation to this project of £294,311 which has arisen through progress of the development stage from unallocated S106 funds.
 3. To approve the refurbishment of Gade Avenue car park and subsequent implementation of car-parking charges subject to a business case being developed.
 4. To approve the proposed phased programme of works for Cassiobury Park.
 5. To approve delegated authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services in consultation with the portfolio holder for any future changes to the design and specification.
 6. To note the contents of the report and the progress made to date and the Round 2 submission to HLF/BIG in February 2014.

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Report approved by: Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 Background

Cassiobury Park is Watford's oldest and most popular Park with a rich and varied history receiving an estimated 1 million visits a year. Following positive initial discussions with the HLF WBC successfully made a Round 1 application to the joint HLF/BIG Parks for People Programme in February 2012 with an award of £418,600 towards an estimated total Round 2 development costs of £608,604, the remainder funded by WBC.

3.2 Round 2 progress and consultation

The WBC Project staff including Project Officer and Community Park Ranger were appointed in January of 2013 with the procurement of Land Use Consultants Ltd (LUC) appointed as design consultants and Community First Partnership (CFP) appointed as Activity Planning Consultants to form the wider design team. From February 2013 the project team has worked according to a set programme on producing a portfolio of design drawings and package of supporting documents for Round 2 submission to the HLF in February 2014. These include an overall master plan for the park detailed to RIBA stage D, a comprehensive cost plan, an Activity Plan, a business plan, a Conservation Management Plan and a 10 year Management & Maintenance Plan, all requirements of this round.

A detailed, wide reaching and inclusive consultation programme has been carried out according to the Consultation and Communication Strategy produced by CFP. This has included a visitor observation study, a visitor survey and two design consultation periods. The two design consultation periods presented the public with an opportunity to view and comment on the designs and plans for the park as they have developed over the summer. A consultation review and summarised responses can be found in the report in Appendix B.

Alongside the wider public consultation the design team held several stakeholder consultation meetings regarding key areas of the project. This includes 2 meetings regarding the Hub building and one regarding the car-park refurbishment with meetings to come regarding the River, Canal and Local Nature Reserve Proposals and a further meeting regarding the car-park prior to Round 2 submission.

The development costs (costs related to developing the Round 2 application) outlined at Round 1 were £608,604 with a HLF grant of £418,600 and WBC match funding of £190,004. The current estimated development costs up to submission in February are £476,216 with a HLF grant of £327,540 and WBC match funding of £148,676. This represents an overall saving on development costs of £132,388 and a saving on WBC's Development stage match funding commitment of £41,328. The WBC match funding can be carried forward to Delivery Stage.

3.3 Current detailed proposals – Capital

The final Stage D designs as of 17/12/13 are attached in appendices A. In summary these are the capital elements of the scheme as follows;

- New formal entrance to the park off Rickmansworth Rd. The design will create a more welcoming and impressive high-end landscaped entrance representative of the wider park. Using quality landscape materials and plants typical of a country park and estate including pleached lime trees, herbaceous borders and granite setts. The entrance will also have heritage themes linked to the old park gates. These will include information boards and designs in the paving representing where the gates once stood.
- Work to improve all entrances to the park. All entrances will use the same paving designs, bespoke obelisk and signage to create welcoming, inviting and standard approaches to the park.
- The historic bandstand relocated from the town centre to its original location within the park in a more informal setting. The bandstand will be refurbished with a new colour palette (based on the Capel family colours) and placed on an informal raised grass mound (rather than stone plinth) to retain visibility.
- The Cha Cha Cha Tea Pavilion building extended and refurbished with restoration to the café garden area. The extension to the pavilion will add an extra room creating additional much needed space for customers. New toilets will create extra capacity and a more user friendly layout. The Cha Cha Cha 'garden' will be landscaped with a new paved veranda, trees, paths and to include a drinking fountain constructed to the same design as the original which was lost many years ago.
- Work to improve the layout and visual impact of Gade Avenue car-park.
- Work to the pools. The extremely popular and well used pools area will be refurbished with the design of the basic 3 pools remaining but with additional play fountains, water and natural play, landscaping (trees, shrubs and grasses), shelters and seating areas.
- Creation of a new Park Hub building. Nine small ancillary buildings currently located in the west of the formal park will be demolished and replaced by one multi-purpose 'Hub'. A two storey 'split level' building is proposed which sits into the hill on the east-side and will provide pools changing cubicles, toilets, a small kiosk and sports changing rooms at ground level, with a larger café, Cassiobury Parks Management office and a multi-purpose hall/teaching space/exhibition space on the first floor. The design features gabion stone walls (cages filled with local flint) on the ground floor which will be planted with a 'green wall' nurtured. The top floor will have large triple glazed windows with bespoke Corten (also known as weathering steel) panelling and a roof constructed of integrated reflective solar panels.
- River and canal corridor work. The project will re-construct a water wheel on the River Gade in the same location as the original historic Mill house. This will provide an important educational resource informing park users of the traditional use and importance of the river to the former Country Estate. A wider programme of improvement works are also planned for the river corridor and Nature Reserve including removal of weirs, bank improvements and clearance work.
- Park wide infrastructure and restoration works include creation of a new path linking Gade Avenue to the Bowls Club and Cha Cha Cha café, work to improve seating, signage and furniture and work to restore the character and formal

quality of the avenues in the park, including the impressive Lime Avenue linking the park with Whippendell Wood.

Revenue

- Four project staff from award in July 2014 to include Cassiobury Park Project Officer (2 years); Community Park Ranger (5 years) and Education Officer (5 years) and a dedicated Park Manager (3 years following on from Project officer role).
- Activity and event planning; the Activity Plan (appendix C) outlines the events, activity and education programme to be carried out in the park from July 2014 working in partnership with the Council's Events team, Play Rangers, Watford Museum and Sports Development. This includes an extensive training programme for volunteers and staff, a 5 year events and activities programme supported by a £100,000 budget (included in the bid) and a 3 year Green Gym project continuing the good work from other parks in Watford significantly increasing and improving healthy lifestyles across the Borough.
- The restoration project and subsequent enhanced prestige landscape will require an increased maintenance commitment. This is estimated at c£30,000 per annum on an existing budget of £271,000 (figure based on rates provided by Veolia based on their cost proforma). This uplift is proposed to be met by increased staff on site through Veolia's Grounds maintenance contract (approx 3.5 extra apprentice days in the park in addition to existing staff provision), savings to the significant utility bills on site through energy saving building and landscape designs (savings which will be put back into grounds maintenance contract), income generation opportunities including the catering franchise in the Park Hub, car parking charges and event charges and finally volunteer groups working towards maintenance of areas of the park These are outlined in the summary of the Activity and Business Planning report. See Appendix D. Early Estimates suggest that additional annual income in the region of £150,000 would be achievable.
- The new Park Hub will be a significant new building and will replace a series of existing low quality but high maintenance buildings including toilet block, 5 individual pools buildings/dovecotes and 3 redundant brick kiosks currently maintained by Veolia for basic maintenance but by Buildings and Projects for more significant structural repairs. The responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs will be the responsibility of the Council as the building will not transfer to Veolia. Ongoing costs may be met through a number of options and may include (i) a full repairs and maintenance lease agreement with a new buildings / pools / catering operator which will be dependent on the procurement process for the available franchise and initial soft market testing. The Council currently pays the current pools operator c.£18,000 a year to operate the pools and provide a catering operation throughout the year. The Council will retain this budget rather than Veolia. (ii) Significant savings will also be made through utilities to the existing buildings and pools, now paid for by Veolia which amount to £20,000+ per year, including c£18,000 per year on water and sewerage rates alone. A more detailed assessment of previous utility bills will be made and a variation made on the Veolia contract to reflect this significant reduction and used to offset required buildings maintenance for the Park Hub.

- The redeveloped depot is currently the responsibility of Veolia and current buildings are to be demolished including the changing rooms, store rooms and garages. Discussions are underway with Veolia with regards to depot requirements but there will be no uplift required in buildings maintenance.

3.4 **Finance – Development stage update**

As detailed above the development stage is currently estimated at being completed under budget. At Round 1 of the bid to the HLF Watford Borough Council committed to match funding at Delivery stage post award in July 2014 of £1,150,056 towards total capital works, events and education programme and wider project costs of £5,958,456.

As Round 2 and the project has developed through 2013 we have firmed up outline costs from the Round 1 bid. As the feasibility and values of the total cost for the project at delivery stage have now risen to £6,307,267 with a match funding commitment from WBC of £1,444,367 (an uplift of £294,311) as well as contributions from other bodies and volunteer in-kind contributions – see below . The grant to be requested from the HLF remains at £4,534,900. Capping the HLF grant claim at the same request will increase the competitiveness of WBC stage 2 bid against other projects and is recommended.

Discussions with the HLF Project Monitor during the Development Stage have been held in relation to costs and other further potential funding streams with the suggestion that after the February 2014 submission, other avenues are explored in detail to mitigate the level of commitment from WBC with further bids to be made. However, the match funding requirements from WBC are to be funded from committed S106 allocated at Round 1 with an uplift to reflect the requirements from current uncommitted S106. These are detailed below.

3.5 **Plan to submission in February 2014**

The key elements of the design have been completed to RIBA stage D as required by the HLF for a February 2014 submission. These designs are included for final approval by Cabinet- see Appendix A. The report requests delegated approval to the Head of Service for Corporate Strategy and Client Services in consultation with the portfolioholder for elements of the project still to be finalised which will require sign off prior to final submission in February 2014.

The planning applications for the relocation of the bandstand (Listed consent), extension to the Cha Cha Cha café and new Hub building will be submitted following cabinet approval. Discussions have already been held with colleagues in Regeneration and Development.

3.6 **Gade Avenue Car-Park**

The wider restoration and development of the park involves plans to address issues and short comings with the car-park. This includes the removal of the existing visually intrusive over-flow to Gade Avenue car-park which extends out from the main body of the car-park into a highly visible location. This area would be returned to grass. An equivalent overflow capacity would be created within the main body of the car-park which would not be as visible. The car-park will then be re-surfaced and marked out more efficiently allowing for more spaces within the area without increasing the parking

footprint, which is unacceptable to HLF.

Following completion of works it is proposed to instigate parking charges within the car-park linked to a wider access strategy. Appendix D, a summary of the business plan developed by Community First Partnership (CFP) for the bid suggests that a £2 standard charge could yield annual revenues for the park of £73,000. The cost to refurbish the car-park would be £152,500. This figure is based on case studies elsewhere for car parking charges in public parks. However, whether this is appropriate or substantial enough to deter commuters is debatable and the proposal would be to develop a separate business case to assess what would be an appropriate charge and likely potential income.

The HLF funding criteria does not encourage applications which include extensive works to car-parks. Therefore with the understanding that the park requires urgent work to refurbish the Gade Avenue car-park and address the commuter parking issues it is proposed that the refurbishment of the car-park is developed as a separate project outside of the wider HLF project and through "invest to save".

This has the following benefits;

- 1) Removing this from the HLF bid strengthens that bid and make it more competitive.
- 2) This work can be carried out in the Spring of 2014 before the main HLF programme of works later in the year.
- 3) This allows an income stream to be collected in 2014.
- 4) This income could be used to cover the expenditure on the car-park identified above through "invest to save".

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that an initial £625,000 was allocated in the capital programme.

The development costs (costs related to developing the Round 2 application) outlined at Round 1 were £608,604 with a HLF grant of £418,600 and WBC match funding of £190,004. The current estimated development costs up to submission in February are £476,216 with a HLF grant of £327,540 and WBC match funding of £148,676. This represents an overall saving on development costs of £132,388 and a saving on WBC's Development stage match funding commitment of £41,328 making an estimated spend at Development Stage from the capital programme of £123,048. This leaves approximately £501,952 in the current capital programme. Match funding requirements based on the current scheme are detailed below:-

Total scheme cost at Delivery Stage - £6,307,267

HLF Grant - £4,534,900

WBC match funding - £1,444,367 (c£502,000 remaining in the current capital programme (after receipt of grant income from Round 1), £943,000 to be committed from S106 income in 2014/15 and 2015/16). (There is currently £500,000 unallocated S106 available and a further £500,000 S106 to be received from larger approved schemes)

The remaining amount is made up of volunteer in-kind contributions, Cassiobury Croquet Club, HCC and the annual uplift in maintenance costs (offset by savings in utilities and income generation).

Variations to revenue costs will be met from within the existing Veolia contract as described as well as through income generation in the park, as previously described and will be developed as part of the Business Plan developed specifically for the park. No revenue budget currently exists for the new building but will be set up based on the variations to the Veolia contract / savings made elsewhere and grant received from HLF. Staff are funded for 5 years. A budget pressure will exist on expiry of grant after 5 years but will be re-assessed and reviewed annually taking into account levels of income generation, and impact on the long term 10 year management and maintenance plan.

Strategic Finance are satisfied that the information provided at this stage (Round 2) is sufficient to allow a Round 2 application to be made to the HLF in February 2014 with further detail to be provided and approved at delivery stage and on award of grant from HLF.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 In the event that the bid is successful the council will have to comply with the terms under which the monies are given.

4.3 **Equalities**

- The Round 2 consultation exercises held throughout 2013 have received over 1200 detailed responses from residents and park users as well as informally engaging many more. Three key exercises have taken place including firstly a visitor survey. This was carried out by project staff and volunteers from 24th until 28th June with 640 surveys completed. This was followed by two consultation exercises which were used to develop the designs for the park. The first of these consultation events took place from Saturday 18 May until Sunday 2 June when 246 people were questioned regarding initial designs. The feedback from this May/June consultation was used to develop the designs. The new designs were taken out for public consultation from 19 July until 6 September 2013 with 200 full responses. Alongside these wider public consultation events we've consulted key groups as part of the stakeholder panel/workshops which includes Friends of Group, Councillors, sports clubs, wildlife trust, Veolia, Residents associations, Environment Agency, West Herts Golf Club and more.
- The Activity Plan delivered as part of the Round 2 submission includes a key list of target audiences on whom to focus targeted activities. These include eastern European groups and the local Pakistani community, people with disabilities and people on limited incomes. The Activity Plan seeks to increase this range of audiences by promoting the new Park Hub as a high quality visitor facility to address barriers to greater use, create a far reaching events and activities programme and through an education officer establish the park as a key local educational resource for classes of all ages.

4.4 **Potential Risks**

The following risks have been identified;

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
<i>Time delays regarding submission date. Delay in submission may jeopardise overall funding and project delivery. A detailed programme is in place with timelines for all the different elements of the submission. Main risks to programme come from delays in planning application process following cabinet approval.</i>	2	4	8
<i>Technical design issues. Increased costs at delivery stage which add additional match funding costs to WBC. Regular dialogue with design team and project QS has ensured that construction costs have been developed in as much detail as possible at this stage.</i>	2	3	6
<i>Increase in wider project costs. Strict cost control and detailed design briefs and specifications developed reducing risk. Delivery stage services for all consultants have already been procured and finalised.</i>	2	3	6
<i>Construction stage works programme is delayed. Resulting in increased disruption to the public and loss of confidence in council. A well prepared and communicated construction programme which makes ample initial allowances for public access and builds in sufficient allowances for potential slips in programme up front has been developed.</i>	1	3	3

4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 The Cassiobury Park Project Officer, Community Park Ranger, currently in post, will continue to be co-funded by HLF grant if successful as well as 2 new posts, Education Officer and Park Manager, as detailed previously. After grant expiry, posts will be required to be reviewed and re-assessed and fully funded by WBC. The Project Officers post will be deleted on completion of the project.

4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 The Community Park Ranger and Project Officer will continue to be based at the Town Hall but the former and 2 other posts will ultimately be based at the new Park Hub.

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 New staff will link and work with existing staff based in the park and work closely with our Partner Veolia Environmental Services, the park rangers and other community representatives / WBC colleagues.

4.8 Sustainability

- 4.8.1 The project team working with the architects have liaised with WBC planners at all stages ensuring that the building works towards being an exemplar in sustainability and energy saving. Using BREEAM as a guide the building uses energy saving materials throughout with proposed integrated solar panels and biomass wood burning stove, using biomass from Whippendell Wood which will provide significant utility savings on the building and management of the pools facility.

Appendix

Appendix A – Plans and Designs Stage D

Appendix B – Consultation review

Appendix C – Activity Plan

Appendix D – Activity and Business plan summary

Background Papers

None

File Reference

None