

THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CULTURE AND OPERATIONAL SERVICES AND THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**AMINGTON COMMUNITY WOODLAND****EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None

PURPOSE

To update Cabinet on the progress of the Amington Community Woodland Project. Request Cabinet approve the plan for the project and delegate approval for procurement of a Landscape Architect and professional team to the Assistant Director Operations and Leisure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Operational Services. Cabinet to approve delegation of the final plan sign-off to the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Operational Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet endorse the programme management approach as detailed in Appendix 3
2. Cabinet endorse the draft Project Initiation Document (Appendix 1) and reporting lines for the Amington Community Woodland Project.
3. Cabinet approve commencement of the Amington Community Woodland Project, as per the project plan (Appendix 2).
4. Cabinet endorse the design principles and consultation programme set out in the report.
5. Cabinet approve the list of services required from an appointed Landscape Architect and associated professional team, as detailed in Appendix 4.
6. Cabinet authorise the commencement of the procurement process for the Landscape Architect and professional team and delegate responsibility for the appointment to the Assistant Director Operations and Leisure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Operational Services to appoint.
7. The 2018/19 approved Capital Programme be increased by a total of £305k being:
 - Additional £115k for the Amington Community Woodlands scheme to reflect the additional external funding secured through the “Small Habitats Grant”
 - Additional £150k for the Amington Community Woodlands scheme to reflect the revised phasing of the project funded through Section 106 agreement.
 - Additional £40k for the Community Woodland Cycleway scheme to reflect the additional Section 106 contributions to fund the scheme.
8. Cabinet give delegated authority to the Assistant Director Operations and Leisure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Operational Services to:
 - a. agree the final design for the hard and soft landscaping works

- b. prepare and endorse the contract briefs to be used as part of future procurement of contractors to implement the elements of the scheme;
- c. Commence the procurement processes
- d. Award the contracts to the successful tenderers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Amington Community Woodland Project is part of an overall group of projects (see Appendix 3) to redevelop parts of the former Tamworth golf course. The Golf Course masterplan was finalised in 2014 after extensive consultation with the public over options to redevelop the site. In 2016 planning permission was granted for the development of up to 1100 homes, a new primary school, new public open space and a local centre. The Community Woodland, part of the open space network on the site, consists of 8Ha of the former golf course, set aside for the creation of an open space. The project will design and create a new open space with a mosaic of habitats to increase biodiversity and green connectivity in the area as well as space for informal recreation, health and wellbeing. Existing woodland areas will be improved, new woodland planted, meadows created as well as other biodiversity improvements such as bulb planting, bat and bird boxes. Access will be improved through the site with a network of footpaths, connecting with the wider housing development. Walking routes will be created through the site with interpretation and benches.

Funding for the creation and maintenance of the new site is predominantly via a s106 agreement of £500,000.00 which was secured as part of the original consent for the redevelopment of the land. Tranche one (£250,000.00) has been received by the council with the final tranche being due in 2021. There is a separate agreement to transfer £200,000.00 to the council for the construction of the main footpath through the site, linking the north and south of the site.

Small Habitats Grants Programme

TBC has recently been successful in being awarded £115,000.00 of grant funding from the European Union European Structural and Investment Funds 'Small Habitats Grants Programme' managed by Solihull Council. The fund is primarily to increase biodiversity in the GBSLEP area, through habitat improvements. The extra funding will enable the capital element of the project to be started in 2019 with a completion date of October 2020. The injection of external funding will also enable more money to be used for the maintenance of the site in the longer term as well as a part-time ranger to work with volunteers on community projects.

TBC will be entering into a contract with Solihull MBC (as managing authority) in March 2019 to deliver the first phase of the Community Woodland. Funds will be transferred to TBC upon confirmation of defrayed expenditure from TBC.

Programme and Project Plan

There are a number of workstreams associated with the redevelopment of the former golf course. A programme approach is proposed to ensure that the linkages and opportunities each project present are fully maximised. It is proposed that the Executive Leadership team act as the programme board. Individual Project Initiation Documents will be compiled for each project and presented to the programme Board (ELT) for approval.

A project team has been established for the Community Woodland project with a reporting structure to the Assistant Director Operations and Leisure and ultimately the Executive Leadership Team. The soft landscaping element of the project has a number of distinct phases:

Stage one: February – March 2019

Preparatory work with the project team on a number of themes including writing a tender for the procurement of a Landscape Architect (LA) and professional team.

The LA will carry out the following work: Design and produce consultation documents; work up final plan drawings based on consultation results; prepare a tender package for contractor procurement; Management of appointed contractor; Project/site management including Health and Safety when a landscape contractor is on site. Please see Appendix 4 for more details.

Stage two: April – August 2019

The LA will work with TBC and consultation groups to develop the final scheme for the site and will put together tender documents for the appointment of a main contractor to construct the final scheme. It is anticipated the LA will act as project manager for the creation of the final scheme. This stage will include consultation with groups on the plan; see the section on consultation and engagement below for more details.

Stage three: August – November 2019

TBC will work with the LA to develop a full tender package for the construction of the community woodland. Tendering will be for a main contractor to carry out the hard and soft landscaping for the site with a start date for planting to be in the winter of 2019/20.

Stage four: November 2019 – March 2020

Hard and Soft landscaping of the site. Project management by TBC and the LA. Continued liaison with consultation groups. It is anticipated that practical completion for the site will be mid 2020 with a period of defects liability and final completion at least 12months after practical completion.

Please see Appendix 2 for the full project plan.

In addition, the hard landscaping (the main footpath) through the site has been designed and it is intended to construct in spring 2019 in advance of the soft landscaping.

Design Principles

The size of the site is approximately 8Ha and currently comprises amenity grassland, rough grassland, scrub, parkland, semi-natural broadleaved woodland and tall ruderal habitats. Landscape proposals will include new and retained amenity grassland, meadow grassland, scrub, improving existing woodland, new woodland and orchard planting. A network of footpaths will also be installed. Site proposals will be put together to maximise the biodiversity improvements to the site, as most have been assessed as poor at present. The site design will also have a network of footpaths to enable users to access the different areas and habitats. A key design principle will be to integrate the site with the surrounding housing development. TBC are working with the housing developer to ensure that as far as possible the site is integrated with new housing.

Consultation and Engagement

Consultation on proposals will be carried out with targeted groups. Groups identified are:

- Wildlife volunteers on the nearby Hodge Lane Nature Reserve
- TBC ward members
- Residents of the new housing development
- Existing residents adjacent to the former golf course
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
- Tame Valley Wetlands

Focussing consultation towards specific groups will enable more meaningful one to one engagement to be carried out with people who will be users of the open space once completed. It will also be a starting point for developing a volunteer group to work on the site in the future.

Consultation will focus on awareness raising of the project so far and what can be influenced.

Tender approvals

The total capital cost of the site development is anticipated to be circa £495,000.00 and will be split into three main contracts:

LA tender will be circa £35,000.00 and will be procured via In-tend system. Approval to appoint is sought by the AD Operations and Leisure.

Soft landscape contractor tender will be circa £260,000.00 for works associated with the woodland design (not including the main footpath running through the site). To be procured through the In-Tend system. Approval to appoint is sought by the AD Operations and Leisure.

Hard landscape contractor tender will be circa £200,000 for the main footpath. Approval to appoint is sought by the AD Operations and Leisure.

Maintenance:

Landscape maintenance and management for initial 3-5 years for habitat establishment will be circa £100,000.00. this may be included in the soft landscaping contract or undertaken by the Council. A decision on this will be taken once the design is complete and prior to tendering for the works. Using the main contractor that carried out the construction of the site or an approved sub-contractor will ensure that the various habitats are established and biodiversity gains are maximised. To be procured through the In-Tend system.

Long-term maintenance of the site will be carried out by TBC grounds maintenance and possibly volunteers and a site ranger. Maintenance will be carried out in accordance with a site management plan and will utilise the remaining s106 monies.

Key outputs of the Amington Community Woodland Project:

- New public open space, accessible to all
- Biodiversity improvements to the site both short and long term
- A new public open space in the east of the borough, highlighted as lacking in quality open space in the 2011 open space review.
- An accessible open space for wildlife and residents to benefit from.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Leave the site as it is. This option is not favoured as there is currently no public access to the site and it still has the layout of the former golf course. Much of the site has little or no biodiversity value. If the site is not developed the Council would not be fulfilling its obligations as contained in the Section 106 agreement.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The site benefits from a s106 obligation of £500k for the creation and maintenance of a community woodland (£250,000 has already been received) and £200k for the implementation of the main footpath (expected to be received by the end of February 2019). In addition TBC have secured £115k from the Small Habitats Grant Programme, which is primarily focussed on biodiversity and access improvements.

The table below details the revised budget provisions as outlined in the report.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Current Budgets						
Community Woodland						
Cycleway	160	-	-	-	-	160

Amington Community Woodland	50	50	50	50	50	250
Total	210	50	50	50	50	410

Funded By

Section 106	210	50	50	50	50	410
Total	210	50	50	50	50	410

Revised Budgets

Community Woodland Cycleway	200	-	-	-	-	200
Amington Community Woodland	315	50	-	-	-	365
Total	515	50	-	-	-	565

Funded By

Section 106	400	50	-	-	-	450
Small Habitats Grants Programme	115	-	-	-	-	115
Total	515	50	-	-	-	565

It should be noted that any unspent monies in relation to the main footpath (Community Woodland Cycleway) will need to be returned to the developer.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

The second payment of £250,000 is not received. Should this second payment not be received then the project scope would need to be reduced or the project split into 2 phases.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The site will be designed to increase accessibility. Paths will be created through the site for multi-use (e.g. walking/cycling/pushchairs/wheelchairs). There are steep gradients in some parts of the site but as much as possible access will be created that is inclusive. The site will be publicly accessible 24hrs a day, 7 days a week.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The community woodland has been designed to be a long term management and improvement project for the council. The council has a track record of successfully recruiting volunteers to help manage and improve sites in the borough. It is anticipated that a volunteer group will be set up on the site to manage and improve the site for wildlife and biodiversity once the main construction phase is complete.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

REPORT AUTHOR

Corinne O'Hare x278

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Decision to dispose of Golf Course Asset made by Cabinet on 27th November 2014.

<http://democracy.tamworth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=120&MIId=656&Ver=4>

Tamworth Borough Council Local Plan:

https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/planning_docs/Local-Plan-2006-2031.pdf

APPENDICES

1. Project Initiation Document
2. Project Plan
3. Project organisational chart
4. List of services to be provided by the Landscape Architect