

Thursday, 20 January 2022

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Entertainment and Leisure

Amington Community Woodland Review

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To update Cabinet on changes to the Amington Community Woodland Project – an element of the Amington Golf Course Development Project

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the amended project name and combine the 2 existing capital budgets (CP2852 and CP2853) to create 1 single project.
2. Approve the revised project budget of £781,500 including the ongoing maintenance fund
3. Approve the revised capital project programme and include the additional funding of £131,510 received creating a total Capital Budget for the project of £581,500.
4. Approve the release of a further £331,510 from the section 106 account to the capital programme to fund the revised capital budget.
5. Approve the release of up to £200,000 from section 106 account to the Revenue Account over the next 10 years to contribute to the maintenance of the area.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update to the Amington Community Woodland Project Cabinet report on the 25th Feb 2019 in relation to changes to the project name, budget and programme.

Options Considered

No other options are available

Resource Implications

The project budget is derived from s106 contributions from the Amington Golf Course housing developer.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The project budget can only be spent on the creation and maintenance of the Community Woodland site.

Equalities Implications

None

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Woodland creation has a range of environmental and sustainability benefits including increased biodiversity, improved air quality in urban areas, health benefits, flood mitigation, reduced soil erosion, water filtration and reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

Background Information

Following the Amington Community Woodland Project Cabinet report on the 25th Feb 2019 the following decisions were made:

1. Cabinet endorsed the programme management approach.
2. Cabinet endorsed the Project Initiation Document and reporting lines for the Amington Community Woodland Project.
3. Cabinet approved commencement of the Amington Community Woodland Project, as per the project plan.
4. Cabinet endorsed the design principles and consultation programme set out in the report
5. Cabinet approved the list of services required from an appointed Landscape Architect and associated professional team.
6. Cabinet authorised the commencement of the procurement process for the Landscape Architect and professional team and delegated 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. In addition, Cabinet gave 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.

There have been a number of changes to the project since February 2019 and this Cabinet report summarises the current situation.

Change to the project name

The project team propose changing the name of the project to **Amington Nature Park**. As the project design has developed the value of the other habitats within the site, in addition to the woodland habitat, has been recognised and the aim of the project has been expanded to retain and enhance additional habitats to the woodland.

Cabinet is requested to approve the revised project name.

Changes to the project budget

The following budgetary changes have occurred since February 2019.

1. Due to the delay caused by the pandemic and the cessation of EU funding, the opportunity to add £115,000 of external funding from the EU Small Habitats Fund to the project budget has not proved possible.

2. The final tranche of s106 funding has been received. As the s106 funds that make up the project budget are index-linked so the value of these funds has increased.

A revised project budget is provided below:

Funding Source	Date Received	Value	Released from Section 106 accounts	Comment
S106 Agreement R6708 PM4719	22/08/2018	£250,000	Yes	First payment for the creation and maintenance of the Community Woodland
	22/11/2018	£24,500	No	Indexation payment
S106 Agreement R6708 PM4719	09/12/2021	£250,000	No	Second and final payment for the creation and maintenance of the Community Woodland
	09/12/2021	£51,500	No	Indexation payment
S106 Agreement (2019 Deed of Variation) R6708 PM4719	28 02 2019	£200,000	No	Contribution towards the costs of the path network within 'Amington Community Woodland' area
Interest		£5,510	No	All interest accrued and ongoing on received monies- (current figure shown)
Project Budget TOTAL (gross)		£781,510		
LESS expenditure to date + commitments		-£68000		Professional Fees spent and committed to date from appointed landscape architect and subsequent variation orders due to pandemic
		-£200,000	No	To be allocated to a retained fund specific for maintenance of the site and to be drawn down annually for a period of 10 years.
Remaining Project Budget TOTAL (net) capital and development works		£513,510		Of which £313,510 to be allocated for landscaping works And £200,000 to be allocated to path works

Section 106 funding is legally constrained so that the funding can only be spent on the creation and maintenance of the Nature Park. It is anticipated that the cost of the initial capital works can be met from the project budget so that funds will remain for future site development works with community groups, in conjunction with the Wild About Tamworth project.

Up to £200k of the total project cost will be allocated to a retained fund for future maintenance of the site and will be drawn down annually for a period of 10 years.

In 2019 part of the Section 106 agreement was varied to permit the Council to undertake the construction of the path network through the community woodland, these works were initially the responsibility of the developer. The variation resulted in the developer paying the Council an additional £200k to undertake these works and it is requested that this additional funding be added to the capital programme for the community woodland to complete these works.

All section 106 monies received by the Council are required to be released from the section 106 accounts to the capital programme for these works as indicated in the above table.

Cabinet is requested to approve the revised project budget.

Changes to the project programme

The project programme has been amended since the February 2019 Cabinet Report. The programme has been extended by:

1. The effect of the pandemic. Personnel on the professional team were made redundant and lockdown affected all elements of the programme.
2. The effect of Protected Species legislation. The Natural England licence for Great Crested Newt works first required Reserved Matters approval from the planning authority which was delayed due to the pandemic. This led to missing the single annual period available for Great Crested Newt translocation works.

A revised project programme is provided at Appendix A. Cabinet is requested to approve the revised programme.

Next Steps

Subject to the decisions by Cabinet on the information provided in this Cabinet report, an updated Project Initiation Document will be produced.

The site concept design has been agreed. The full specification of the works is now required for the tender process. It is hoped to complete the tender process and appoint a contractor in summer 2022.

Report Authors

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List of Background Papers

None

Appendices

APPENDIX A – REVISED PROJECT PROGRAMME