

# **Management Committee**

## **15 August 2017**

### **Heritage Lottery Fund Bid – Radipole Park and Gardens**

#### **For Decision**

#### **Portfolio Holder(s)/ Briefholder**

Cllr Kate Wheller – Community Facilities

#### **Senior Leadership Team Contact:**

S Hill, Strategic Director

#### **Report Author:**

Tara Williams – Greenspace & Bereavement Services Manager

#### **Statutory Authority**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To present to the committee a funding request from Greenspace & Bereavement Services, in conjunction with the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, to enhance Radipole Park and Gardens and help secure a £1million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

#### **Recommendations**

- 2 That Management Committee;
  - (a) Agrees to the submission of a stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the repair and enhancement of Radipole Park Gardens. If successful, a further report will be made to your committee.
  - (b) Approves the allocation of £30,000 to be used as additional match funding for a Heritage Lottery ‘Parks for People’ bid to restore the physical and cultural heritage of Radipole Park and Gardens; to be funded from the reserves already set aside for once off projects.

#### **Reason for Decision**

- 3 To allow an appropriate first stage bid to be made to the Heritage Lottery ‘Parks for People’ fund to restore the heritage of Radipole Park and Gardens. A financial allocation of £30,000 will demonstrate to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) that there is a clear commitment from the council to the project and give every opportunity for the bid to be successful. A minimum

of 10% match funding is required for such projects and although funding to achieve this has been identified within Section 106 allocations, this still leaves the project without any contingency. The allocation of the £30,000 provides this contingency and, importantly for the success of the bid, demonstrates the council's commitment to the project.

## **Background and Reason Decision Needed**

- 4 Radipole Park & Gardens, in the centre of Weymouth, has provided facilities to the local community for nearly a hundred years. It is easily accessible to local residents from five urban districts, including 3 recognised socially deprived wards all of which suffer from a lack of suitable open space provision both in terms of quantity and quality. The current facilities include ornamental gardens, tennis and basketball courts, a play area, a multi-use games area (MUGA), a small skate park and a playing field.
- 5 Following both the 2012 flooding and the storms of 2014, the park and gardens were submerged in water for a number of weeks. As a consequence, much of the path network and surfaces throughout the site have deteriorated and some of the path network has been seriously damaged due to fallen trees and root heave; this has resulted in closure of some pathways.
- 6 Currently, the large playing field floods every year and without major investment in a new drainage scheme it will remain unusable for up to 7 or 8 months of the year. This has resulted in the loss of a junior football pitch.
- 7 Over a decade ago, the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens was formed to work alongside the Council's Parks team with the intention of improving Radipole Park and Gardens. During this time a 'wish list' of site improvements has been drawn up but it has become clear that without financial support, via a 'Parks for People' lottery bid, these aspirations remain will undeliverable as the extent of the work is too extensive to be addressed from either the Parks service budgets or fund raising.
- 8 In July 2015 a Project Enquiry Form was submitted to the HLF outlining a proposal for the heritage restoration of Radipole Park and Gardens. As a result, a HLF Development Manager has visited the site and worked with Council Officers/Friends representatives to provide advice, guidance and support as a First Stage HLF 'Parks for People' submission is prepared.

The proposals for improving the site include:

- Upgrade and incorporate a water feature into the children's play area.
- Upgrade existing path networks.
- Upgrade existing car park surfacing.
- Upgrade existing surfacing and fencing of the tennis, MUGA and basketball courts.
- Introduction of a heritage café and toilet facilities.
- New drainage scheme to alleviate flooding of the playing field, including the introduction of a bog garden, pond and wildlife area.
- Tree planting.

- Additional planting within the gardens.
- Installation of new interpretation signs and park furniture.

9 Extensive consultation has taken place to enable preparation of the bid so that it clearly reflects what local people want. The consultation work has included:

- An engagement questionnaire delivered to 1000 properties that surround the park and gardens, which resulted in a 48% return response.
- Local nurseries and pre-schools were contacted and engagement questionnaires were distributed to parents, resulting in a 60% return response.
- Young Inspectors were briefed on the proposals and visited local primary and secondary schools. The feedback has enabled an informed report from young people to be produced.
- A drop-in event was held in Weymouth's Park district.
- Leaflets and banners have been produced, including script in Polish to engage with local Polish families.
- Meetings have been held with the Chelmsford Street Centre, local Volunteer Groups, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Kingston Maurwood College, the RSPB, the Lawn Tennis Association, Weymouth Civic Society, the local PCSO, Munstys and the Police & Community Safety.
- A number of Friends Group events have been hosted in the park and gardens.
- Weymouth Access Group has been consulted. The site has since been surveyed and a DDA Audit Report will be submitted with the HLF first stage lottery bid.

The heritage value of Radipole Park and Gardens is considered to be of significance both physically and socially. The park has a story to tell and the people who have visited and enjoyed the park over the decades have many fond memories and recollections of how and why the park is important to them. This project will restore the physical fabric of the park and capture and record these memories to create a new chapter in the history of Radipole Park and Gardens for future generations.

10 An outline Activity Plan has also been designed to support the heritage restoration works through a programme of community engagement to rediscover and document the "hidden heritage" of the park and gardens. The project will reconnect local people with their park, explore and celebrate the park's hidden heritage and help to create a new enthusiasm for becoming involved in its future development.

The plan aims to:

- Create opportunities for people to volunteer in projects.

- Encourage people to take an active part in the project.
  - Develop new and/or wider audiences for the parks heritage.
  - Provide information about the heritage and interpret it for people.
  - Create opportunities for people to gain new or increased skills and understanding.
  - Hold events or activities to help the public or particular groups of people learn about the physical and social heritage of the park and gardens.
- 11 The bid will be submitted in August 2017 and a decision by the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the first phase bid by funding the development stage of the project will be made in December 2017.
- 12 Should the funding requested in this report not be approved then there is a high risk that the park and gardens will fall into disrepair and its long term heritage jeopardised. In addition, to this there are several areas of risk that council would be exposed to (see Risk Management).

## Implications

- 13 **Corporate Plan: Empowering Thriving and Inclusive Communities:** The Council will demonstrate its support for a partnership project, with the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, to shape growth and the quality of life in their neighbourhood. The project promotes the district as an area that is inclusive and accessible and supports and engages people of all ages. It actively promotes health choices and lifestyle with our health partners, eg. the £1M bid submission is a priority action for 2017/18 in the Melcombe Regis Board Strategic Plan 2017-21.

*Improving Quality of Life:* This project clearly supports growth and promotes social health and well-being.

- 14 **Financial:** The council does not have a budget for grants to support community open space projects. Any additional financial support of the project will need to be derived from the reserves already set aside for once off projects. Once allocated, the funds will not be available to support other schemes.

The project is being designed to be as sustainable into the future as is possible, this is a key requirement for both the Council and the HLF. To this end, the project includes a catering facility that would be income generating. The income would be offset to both assist in the slightly increased revenue costs after the project and to maintain capital infrastructure, which currently is in rapid decline in some areas.

- 15 **Equalities:** The restoration works to Radipole Park and Gardens will mean they are far more accessible to those with disabilities. The heritage restoration project will provide a range of facilities to improve quality of life for people of all age groups. The gardens play a vital role in offering outdoor space that is not available to many people with low incomes who live in houses of multiple occupancy, flats or shared accommodation that have no gardens or outdoor space. This is especially relevant to adult

mental wellbeing and the mental and physical well-being of children who need space to play and develop.

- 16 **Environmental:** The park and gardens are an important green space in the heart of an urbanised area. Important not only to people but also wildlife, as the park and gardens are adjacent to an RSPB SSSI nature reserve. Opportunities to conserve wildlife and to create and actively manage wildlife habitats are included in the landscape design and will increase people's access to wildlife. Having reserves in such close proximity to urban areas is nationally rare and provides an opportunity for experience and learning to a difficult to reach group who cannot easily afford to travel to or pay to visit.
- 17 **Economic Development:** Play, sports and well maintained/managed open spaces can contribute to economic growth by helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and by contributing to the development of health and wellbeing. Having high quality well maintained facilities for people and their families to use and enjoy, that are located close to housing, is important in making the borough attractive as a location to move to or re-locate business to. Radipole Park and Gardens is a prime example of just such a facility being located near residential housing with a year round rather than seasonal appeal.

### **Risk Management (including Health & Safety)**

The major risks to the council are as follows:

18 Financial

The park and gardens are in a state of decline, as mentioned previously in the report. Many hard surfaces are of poor quality and some pathways are closed off as a result of insurance claims for accidents that were made despite best attempts to keep on top of repairs and monitoring. The main risk area lies in infrastructure and the need for monies to effect long term repairs and bring the gardens to a point where modest revenue repairs can maintain them in good condition. Given the projected availability of monies in the future, there is low confidence that funds could be found within the council whereas the successful bid would result in these risks being removed.

19 Health & Safety

As stated above, there are currently significant issues of health and safety within the park and gardens in respect mainly of footpath and hard surface quality. Failure to rectify infrastructure defects and replace other items will lead to increased risk of accidents, the closure of certain elements and or features and an ongoing revenue cost to keep those elements secured to prevent access.

20 Reputational

The park and gardens are high profile and very visible within the community and are a clear and practical indication of the council's policies

and what it provides as a direct service for the community to use and enjoy. Currently the park is in slow decline, some areas are closed off, others in need of replacement or repair and some elements have been removed and not replaced. Complaints are increasing around the flooding problems in the gardens, closed pathways and requests for more and improved play equipment and young people's recreational facilities are common. The support of such a bid by the allocation of monies will have a positive reputational impact displaying very clearly the councils desire to provide quality open space facilities.

## **Human Resources**

- 21 This will have low impact on staffing, additional work should be limited if designed correctly and should be met from existing staff resources. The Friends of Radipole Park Drive are supplying volunteer resources that are time based, which would otherwise place a strain on the service area. The second stage bid will include money to be used to pay both a part time Project Manager and a Parks Development Officer who would be employed on a part time fixed duration contract by the council.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 22 Consultation on the recommendations in this report has been undertaken with the briefholder for Community Facilities, Cllr Kate Wheller.

## **Appendices**

### **Background Papers**

Radipole Park and Gardens Public Engagement Research Report 2016

### **Footnote**

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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