

# **Management Committee**

## **12 December 2017**

### **Masterplan for The Marsh**

#### **For Decision**

##### **Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr Kate Wheller – Community Facilities

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

M Hamilton, Strategic Director

##### **Report Author:**

T. Hurley, Leisure Commissioning Manager

T. Williams, Interim Open Spaces Manager

##### **Statutory Authority**

Localism Act 2011 – ‘general power of competence’.

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update members on recent stakeholder consultation on draft masterplan for The Marsh and seek Committee approval for the masterplan.

#### **Officer Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the committee:
  - a) notes the outcomes of residents and stakeholder consultation sessions on the draft masterplan;
  - b) approves the draft masterplan for The Marsh (Appendix A) for implementation;
  - c) notes the recommendations of the Policy Development Committee and instructs officers to both present an implementation programme for the masterplan to the Policy Development Committee early in 2018 and seek additional sources of funding for any improvements to The Marsh.

#### **Reason for Decision**

3. To ensure committee approval of the masterplan for implementation and to reflect the recommendations of Policy Development Committee.

## **Background and Reason Decision Needed**

### **a) Policy context**

4. In the action plan for the council's Sports Facilities Strategy, the development of a masterplan for The Marsh was identified as a task to be undertaken.
5. In parallel to implementation of the Sports Facilities Strategy, the borough council undertook a comprehensive review of its parks and open spaces service in 2015 with the aim of making budget savings and increasing community involvement in the management of facilities such as The Marsh. This service review resulted in changes to the operation and management of The Marsh.

### **b) Development of the masterplan**

6. The draft masterplan for The Marsh is the result of work by officers and the Policy Development Committee over the last three years and has taken in to account the service reviews of both the Parks & Open Spaces service and Weymouth Swimming Pool.
7. The development process has involved extensive community consultation and stakeholder engagement. In addition to on-going dialogue with the key users of the site (e.g. indoor bowls club, junior football club and Friends group) the following consultation has been undertaken:
  - in 2015, as part of the service review of the Park & Open Spaces service, extensive public consultation was undertaken on the nature of the service itself and how it operates The Marsh, generating 417 replies;
  - in 2016, targeted consultation with local young people by the Young Inspectors (a group facilitated by Action for Children) generated 148 responses - nearly all those that responded were aged under 19 with over 60% aged between 11-13 years.
8. The results of the above consultations have previously been reported to Policy Development Committee and have been instrumental in the development of the masterplan. At its meeting in June 2017, the Committee agreed the draft masterplan and instructed officers to carry out one final round of community and stakeholder consultation sessions. This resulted in the following:
  - consultation drop-in session for residents on the afternoon / evening on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 held at STEPS club for young people;
  - stakeholder consultation workshop on 15<sup>th</sup> September.
9. The community consultation drop-in session was well attended with approximately 80 local residents taking part. The sessions was hosted by the briefholder (Cllr Wheller) and council officers from the following

services: open spaces, community safety, community development and leisure. The Friends of The Marsh also participated in the session and helped to promote it locally. In general, those who took part were supportive of the masterplan and its proposals for new facilities. The key issues that arose from the consultation were as follows:

- a) there is significant demand for a new (reinstated) play area;
- b) a skate park would provide activities for older children although the management of anti-social behaviour and noise needs to be considered;
- c) there are significant concerns about anti-social behaviour, particularly drug use and noise from vehicles (cars and scooters) in the car parks and on the paths in the evenings and at night;
- d) concern about the loss of the running track which some recreational runners still use;
- e) The Marsh is widely valued by residents as both an important area of open space and as a sporting facility, and any improvements would be welcome.

10. The stakeholder consultation workshop on 15<sup>th</sup> September was attended by twelve people including local members and representatives from the police, Westham community group, Public Health Dorset, Dorset County Council, SLM (Weymouth Swimming Pool) and Active Dorset. The key issues that emerged from this workshop were as follows:

- a) the need to restrict car access to the swimming pool car park at night (perhaps via removal bollards);
- b) a community-run café may be ideally placed to serve users of the play area and skate park – perhaps operated/hosted by the bowls or boxing club;
- c) there could be better opportunities for dog walkers with clearer signage – perhaps a dog agility area;
- d) different groups have different perceptions of the site but perhaps focusing on its role as a venue for football pitches and also anti-social behaviour problems;
- e) a skate park, providing an opportunity for more positive activity, could help to reduce anti-social behaviour;
- f) there is a need for more collective community action to improve the site;
- g) The Marsh has an important role to play in the health and wellbeing of the community.

11. Following these consultation sessions, officers have explored the potential for relocating and co-locating the proposed play area and skate park, and particularly to locate these two facilities together and close to the car park adjacent to the Moonfleet indoor bowls club. However, there are problems with ground conditions (water-logging) in parts of the site and, on balance, it would seem that the locations proposed in the draft masterplan are both cost-effective (re-using the existing play area site) and allow the site to meet the demand for youth football pitches. It is also important that the proposed skate park is well away from housing due to noise issues – a factor which limits the options for its location.

**c) Draft masterplan**

12. The draft plan as set out **Appendix A** has been developed over the last three years, drawing upon the results of consultation and taking into account the changes to usage (i.e. decommissioning of the running track and proposals for a new boxing club). The draft plan still proposes the identification of the following zones of activity:

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Activity/beneficiaries</b>	<b>Facilities</b>
A	Youth facilities	Possible skate park / parkour / BMX facilities.
B	Youth football	Football pitches within and adjacent to decommissioned athletics track.
C	Youth football	Football pitches.
D	Community orchard	Community orchard within and around existing tree planting.
E	Swimming / fitness	Weymouth Swimming & Fitness Centre.
F	Facilities for younger children	Reinstate as play area.
G	Indoor sports for all ages	Proposed new Boxing Club building linked to Moonfleet Indoor Bowls Club.
H	Community green areas	General amenity areas.

13. Although the masterplan has not been amended as a result of recent community and stakeholder consultation, the need for various improvements has been highlighted – these are issues more to do with the operation of the site rather than its layout. In particular, the borough council and all partners need to work towards addressing the following:

- anti-social behaviour – there is a need to reduce the inappropriate use of vehicles on the site and also drug misuse;
- the successful creation of new facilities (e.g. play area and skate park) in such a way as to benefit residents of all ages and reduce anti-social behaviour;

14. The development of the masterplan has highlighted the latent energy and enthusiasm of the local community to improve The Marsh. The council should, therefore, continue to work with key agencies to help promote and support community action. In particular, the Friends of The Marsh has the

potential to be a focus for community action and a key partner for the council in the operation of the site.

15. In addition, it is important to realise that The Marsh and its adjacent areas are now a 'hub' for a whole range of activities and facilities including:

- Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre,
- STEPS club for young people,
- Moonfleet Indoor Bowls Club
- Weymouth Swimming & Fitness Centre
- Proposed new clubhouse for Weymouth Amateur Boxing Club

The Marsh and its environs are, therefore, a key resource for the whole of Weymouth and should be recognised as such perhaps via the naming of the site and its promotion.

#### **d) Views of Policy Development Committee**

16. The draft masterplan was considered by Policy Development Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> November and it recommended for approval by Management Committee. Policy Development Committee also requested that, if adopted, officers integrate the masterplan's implementation into their work programmes and report back to the committee on progress in one year's time (December 2018).
17. To provide a clearer timetable for improvements to the site, the Committee asked that an implementation plan for the masterplan be developed and presented by officers in 2018. In addition, members asked for all efforts to be made by both officers and community groups to maximise any investment in the site (which will come from S106 contributions from the Curtis Fields development) by seeking additional funding.
18. The Curtis Fields development will produce developer contributions of £295,000 for a new skate park at The Marsh (and other youth facilities) and £80,000 is already held by the council for a new play area. There is the potential to seek funding from other sources, such as Sport England, for a new skate park should the developer contributions not be sufficient. However, the ability of the council to pursue such additional funding will depend on officer capacity at that point.

## **Implications**

17. **Corporate Plan.** Priority: *Empowering Thriving and Inclusive Communities*: Actively promote health choices and lifestyles with our health partners so that people are able to improve their physical and mental health and well-being.
18. **Financial.** At present, the Open Spaces service is implementing the outcome of the recent service review and the deletion of the budget for sports provision at The Marsh. Any future improvements to the site will need to either be undertaken by local clubs and residents' groups (such as The Friends of The Marsh) or funded by developer contributions (as is the case for the proposed new play area and skate park).

19. **Equalities.** Consultation to date engaged with a broad range of the community with targeted engagement with young people via the work of the Young Inspectors.
20. **Economic Development.** No implications.
21. **Risk Management (including Health & Safety).** The approach to the development of the masterplan as set out in this report is one designed to take account of the council's financial constraints and the need to avoid the risk of unduly raising community expectations as to what the council can deliver at The Marsh.

## Consultation and Engagement

22. Significant consultation has been undertaken with regard to the overall purpose of the site and on the draft masterplan under the guidance of Policy Development Committee. The briefholder and ward members have been consulted on this report.

## Appendices

23. **Appendix A** – Proposed masterplan for The Marsh.

## Background Papers

24. Weymouth & Portland Borough Council *Sports Facilities Strategy* 2014.

## Footnote

25. 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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