

ITEM 10 Fishlake Meadows – Management Plan

Report of the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

- 1. That the management plan as set out in annex 1 to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That approval is granted to market test for site management support by preparing a service level agreement (to be drafted on terms to be agreed by officers) and publishing an OJEU PIN Notice.**

SUMMARY

- Land at Fishlake Meadows (identified in annex 2 to the report) will be transferred to the Council as part of the s106 agreement for the development of land at Oxlease Farm, Romsey (TVN 15/03036/RESS).
- The transfer is conditional upon the site being managed as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and the site being protected, managed and enhanced for its conservation value, protected species and ecological importance.
- This report and attached management plan sets out how it is proposed this will be achieved.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The attached management plan and other documents have been prepared following extensive public and stakeholder engagement and consultation. This included hosted site visits, group talks, local drop-in sessions in the town centre as well as information being distributed through more traditional media channels asking the local community to comment.
- 1.2 The plan has been prepared with the assistance of partners from the Romsey Waterways Partnership (which consists of representatives from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, Environment Agency and the Romsey and District Society).
- 1.3 The first draft was published or full public consultation in December 2015. 73 written responses were received with broad support for the plan as well as a number of detailed comments on specific matters.
- 1.4 All of these comments have been published on the Council website along with narrative as to how and where these comments have (or have not) been taken into account.

- 1.5 The plan is intended to explain, in detail, how the site will be managed, and includes 5 key objectives which cover;
- Public access
 - Community engagement
 - Flood risk
 - Positive management of the canal SSSI, and
 - Appropriate management to protect the sites habitat and species.
- 1.6 The plan is drafted in accord with Joint Nature Conservancy Guidelines. In addition to this it is intended to draft a summary of the plan for ease of public reference and which is consistent in format and style to other sites managed as part of the Council's LNR portfolio.

2 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 2.1 One of the key projects within the current corporate plan (Investing in Test Valley) is to “deliver a new nature reserve at Fishlake Meadows” this is in accord with the Council commitment to *Enjoy the Natural and Built Environment*

3 Consultations/Communications

- 3.1 Extensive public engagement has been undertaken since early 2015, culminating in a full public consultation exercise running from December 2015 into early 2016. 73 written responses were received from a variety of interested parties and residents – these are summarised at annex 3.
- 3.2 Primary stakeholder consultation has included statutory bodies including HCC, Environment Agency, and Natural England as well as other key stakeholders such as Hants and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the Romsey and District Society.

4 Options

- 4.1 Adoption (or not) of the draft management plan.
- 4.2 Agreement (or not) to seek to work with a partner organisation for day-to-day site management.

5 Option Appraisal

5.1 Adoption (or not) of the draft management plan

- 5.1.1 The site will be transferred to the Council shortly, and along with the transfer of the land comes the responsibility for a duty of care for its management and towards those whom access and use it. The proposed management plan and subsequent SLA will set out how this duty will be suitably and responsibly managed and reviewed.

5.1.2 To not adequately discharge this duty is not an option. The Council could instead seek to sub-lease or transfer the site to another legal entity, however the Council would lose the ability to influence how the site is managed, and as well as seeing the site decline or public access restricted, could be in breach of conditions of the land transfer.

5.1.3 The recommended option is therefore to adopt the management plan.

5.2 Agreement (or not) to seek to work with a partner organisation for day-to-day site management

5.2.1 The Council has a strong track record in managing LNR's (with all 13 of its SINC's designated in 'positive management') and could seek to manage this site in-house as part of its existing portfolio.

5.2.2 However, given the considerable experience and expertise of external environment charitable organisations locally, it is proposed that the Council explores the potential for commissioning such organisation(s) for certain management prescriptions or a partnership basis.

5.2.3 This has the potential to draw in specific land management expertise as well as the opportunity to access external funding sources not open to the Council in isolation.

5.2.4 Staffing site management is funded as part of the s106 agreement for the transfer of the site, and therefore the recommended option is to seek support for expressions of interest for the development of a partnership agreement / SLA for the carrying out of certain management prescriptions.

6 Risk Management

6.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's Risk management process and has identified significant (Red or Amber) risks as detailed in the risk assessment. The Required Actions proposed to reduce these risks will incur additional control costs/insurance as outlined in the Resource Implications section of this report.

7 Resource Implications

7.1 A commuted sum will be transferred to TVBC to cover the ongoing management of the site. The site will be insured as part of our general policy (for public liability).

8 Legal Implications

8.1 Legal Services are dealing with the legal transfer of the site and terms for the s106 agreement.

9 Equality Issues

9.1 An EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.

10 Other Issues

10.1 Flooding – The EA and Natural England will be statutory consultees to all major works on site and as such, will ensure any site management prescriptions make a positive (or at worse a not negative) impact to flood alleviation.

10.2 Wards/Communities Affected – all wards of Romsey and Southern Test Valley.

11 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

11.1 The management plan and appendices to this report set out the benefits of transferring the site into public ownership and identifies what works will be carried out on site to ensure its positive management.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	3	File Ref:	
(Portfolio; Community and Leisure) Councillor Tony Ward			
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	22 June 2016