

 <b>Executive – 10th June 2009</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b>
<b>Title</b>	St Nicholas Park Improvement Project	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Rose Winship <a href="mailto:Rose.winship@warwickdc.gov.uk">Rose.winship@warwickdc.gov.uk</a> 01926 456223  Mark Croston <a href="mailto:Mark.croston@warwickdc.gov.uk">Mark.croston@warwickdc.gov.uk</a> 01926 456231	
<b>Service Area</b>	Cultural Services	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	All Warwick wards	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	Executive – 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2008	
<b>Background Papers</b>		

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	Ref no. 191

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director	22/5/09	Andrew Jones
Chief Executive		
CMT	21/5/09	
Section 151 Officer	21/5/09	Mike Snow
Legal	20/5/09	Peter Oliver
Finance	21/5/09	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	21/5/09	Cllr Susan Gallagher
Consultation Undertaken		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
“Have your Say” consultation with residents of Warwick and users of the park – April 2009		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The report outlines the progress being made on the production of an Improvement Plan funded by the £210k from the Capital Programme for St Nicholas Park and Myton Fields, Warwick, following the unsuccessful Heritage Lottery (HLF) application made in March 2008.
- 1.2 A series of meetings have taken place between officers of Cultural services and representatives of stakeholder groups including The Warwick Society, Warwick Town Council, Friends of St Nicholas Park and the Warwick Chamber of Trade. These meetings considered the results of previous consultations relating to the park and the HLF submission and identified 7 key priorities for a scaled down improvement programme funded by the £210k included in the Capital programme (2009/10 and 2010/11) plus any external funding that can be secured, and where appropriate supported by revenue maintenance budgets.
- 1.3 A consultation exercise with residents and park users during April 2009 has now produced the top three priorities which are pathways including the section or Riverside Walk through the park; improvements to toilet facilities in the park; improved security in the park with particular reference to lighting and CCTV. Details of the consultation and the results are included in Appendix A.
- 1.4 The HLF application was supported by a Conservation Plan which outlined ambitious plans to “develop and regenerate” the park and secure its future for residents and visitors alike. Without the HLF funding to support the Plan, the reality is that the ability to implement the plan has been significantly reduced. However, it is a view of officers and stakeholders that the long term aspirations of the plan should be continued with a medium term action plan produced which reflects funding available at the time. The existing Management Plan for the park will also be revised to clarify the objectives and the methods used to manage, maintain and develop the park on a day to day level.
- 1.5 During the discussions with stakeholders a specific request was received to reinstate the original “mini golf” at the west end of the park. This facility has been out of action since the opening of the Adventure Golf in 2007 and requires some renovation and refurbishment before it can be used. A further report will be brought to the July Executive to seek Members approval for a way forward for this facility.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To approve that officers undertake a “Green Flag Self Assessment” of the management of the park which will in time inform the revision of the Management Plan 2005 - 2010 for St Nicholas Park. The revised Management Plan will become a “live” document clarifying the approach being taken to implement the future improvements in the park but will also reflect the emerging Green Space Strategy and the new working relationship between Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Services.
- 2.2 To approve that the following projects are accepted as the priorities for the Improvement Plan pending revised quotes being received within the £210k Capital Programme budget and subject to the revenue costs for the projects being met within existing resources as agreed by the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.

- 2.2.1 Improved pathways including Riverside Walk
  - 2.2.2 Improved toilet provision and increased capacity
  - 2.2.3 Improved security through lighting and CCTV
- 2.3 To agree that work will continue to identify external funding that could supplement the Capital funding and allow additional improvements to be made in the future.

### **3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The current Management Plan is now out of date. It does not reflect the changes that have taken place as a result of Building on Excellence, nor does it refer to the Improvement Plan based on the HLF application. Officers are keen to produce a document that clarifies the way in which the park is managed with clear officer and community responsibilities. The Green Flag Self Assessment process will identify strengths and weaknesses of the systems in place and offer up possible solutions for the future. The Management Plan will then be produced in line with industry best practice and be in a format that supports a Green Flag Award entry. It will be set within the framework of the emerging Warwick District Greenspace Strategy and aligned to other relevant corporate strategies.
- 3.2 The three projects detailed on 2.1 were the top three priorities from the recent consultation and reflect very closely the priorities identified by the HLF consultation in 2007. Having identified the three priorities, further work is now required to work up detailed, costed schemes, agree timescales and staff resources to manage the schemes. This will involve input from Cultural Services, Neighbourhood Services, Property, and Engineering officers. The lighting scheme will also need input from Warwickshire County Council as it refers to an area of pathway which is an adopted passageway and as such is the responsibility of the County Council.
- 3.3 Whilst there is £210k in the Capital Programme, this is obviously significantly less than the HLF budget of £2.7 million. The development plan included in the HLF application, and approved by the Executive remains the aspirational vision for the park. The three projects included in 2.2 feature in this plan and as such are the first steps towards the vision. If we are to progress the plan, additional funding must be identified. A number of the smaller projects may be achievable by incorporating them into the existing maintenance and improvement schedules eg. ongoing improvements to the pathways through the park: some improvement to signage. Others are suitable for developing into community projects which could be funded by grants which these groups could apply for, but which are not available for local authorities. Examples of this could be the restoration of the memorial tree plaques, or a community garden at the east end of the park. An application is being made to the King Henry VIII Charitable Trust who have expressed an interest in funding a specific project as part of the Improvement Plan. The details of the application will be finalised following the outcome of this report, however initial discussions with the Trust have considered the upgrade of the shelter and the refurbishment of the “mini golf”.

### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Further consultations could be undertaken to gather the opinions of a wider cross section of residents and visitors, however there is a danger of ongoing consultation and no action. The results of the most recent consultation reflect those of previous

exercises, suggesting that the priorities are pretty clear. There could be an argument for including “improvements to wildlife along the river corridor” which came a close fourth in the recent consultation, however, with such limited funds, it is felt that the focus should be on the top three. Should additional funds become available, officers would base further actions on the priorities from the consultation.

- 4.3 Officers could continue to work to the existing Management Plan however this could lead to confusion amongst stakeholders and contractors, and would not support some of the changed working practices that are planned for the park in the future.

## 5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

### 5.1 **Capital**

The Capital Programme includes £210k spread across 2009/10 and 1010/11. Depending on the timing of the projects, some slippage or funds brought forward may be required. This funding is earmarked for the projects referred to in 2.1 and will be confirmed once detailed specifications are agreed and quotations have been received. The HLF bid was £2.7 million and therefore the scale of the works that can be carried out within the Capital Programme is vastly reduced from the original plan submitted within the HLF plan.

### 5.2 **Revenue**

There will be an increase in revenue costs associated with the cleansing of the toilets in the park. Final details of these costs can not be confirmed until the design of the new toilet blocks is confirmed, however an estimate would be in the region of £7,000. The revenue costs of adding a CCTV camera are estimated to be in the region of £4,000. Details of the revenue implications of adding an additional 10 lighting columns have yet to be confirmed.

- 5.3 Work will continue to identify other sources of external funding as explained in 3.2 above.

## 6. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 6.1 The improvement of St Nicholas Park contributes to the Council’s Vision to make Warwick District a “great place to live, work and visit.” The park is a significant destination park, attracting users from Warwick, throughout the district and further afield with many people visiting the park for a day out. By attracting visitors into Warwick, the park also contributes to supporting a vibrant economy in the town and district.
- 6.2 The Corporate Strategy states as one of its objectives – “to increase participation and attendance in the Council’s cultural offering to meet the needs of the local community”. However a well maintained and attractive park can also contribute to other corporate objectives including “to provide high standards of environmental services across the district delivering a sustainable and quality environment”; to maintain a clean and tidy environment; to support the development of thriving town centres”; to make neighbourhoods feel safer”.
- 6.3 The Improvement Plan and future Management Plan for St Nicholas Park will reflect the underlying principles included in the emerging Warwick District GreenSpace Strategy.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 The “Have your Say” consultation exercise took place during April and included face to face discussions with individuals in the park and in the Market Square; a website link to complete the survey on line and questionnaires provided to local stakeholder groups. 304 completed surveys were received and analysed by an independent organisation. The results in Appendix A show the priorities that emerged from the consultation.
- 7.2 The Capital Programme funding referred to in 5.1 will be supplemented by revenue funding where appropriate and agreed by Housing and Property Services. Members may be interested to note that this currently includes, within the Corporate Planned Maintenance Plan being considered elsewhere on the agenda of this meeting, a proposal to allocate £3,000 for the refurbishment of the wooden shelter in the park; £3,000 to repair the timber bridges over the brook in the park; £3,000 to improve disabled access to the café; and a sum, yet to be agreed, to repair and refurbish the ornamental gates and railings at the main park entrance.
- 7.3 Members approved the Heritage Lottery application at the Executive meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008; this included the Conservation Plan referred to in 1.4. The HLF application process required applicants to follow the principles of Green Flag in writing their Management plans and many other external funding agencies consider the Green Flag assessment process as the preferred framework for potential bids.