

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report to Cabinet

11th February 2020

TITLE:	Brough Park and John Hall Gardens Improvement Plan
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Mark Deaville - Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Sports
CONTACT OFFICER:	Robert Wilks - Principal Officer (Leisure and Recreation)
WARDS INVOLVED:	Leek North;

Appendices attached:

Appendix A – Brough Park Masterplan

Appendix B – Revised site plan -

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of revised plans and budget requirements needed to improve Brough Park and John Hall Gardens in line with the new Corporate Plan objective.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the new plan for improvements to Brough Park and John Hall Gardens and allocate funding towards delivery of the plan, which focuses on developing new play and sport facilities as well as work to the lake and creating access from the park into John Hall Gardens.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 Plans for an improved Brough Park have been in development for a number of years. In December 2017 Cabinet approved an ambitious plan which involved the creation of a park masterplan as part of a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This approval included provision of a capital contribution of £200,000 as match funding to help deliver the proposed scheme.
- 3.2 The application to the National Lottery was unsuccessful and soon after, the funding stream was pulled from its portfolio, leaving the project considerably

short of the amount required to complete and therefore unable to be progressed.

- 3.3 New funding streams have since been announced by the National Lottery, however the criteria of these do not lend themselves to a future application by the Council towards this project.
- 3.4 Securing the remaining amount needed to deliver all aspects of the masterplan from external sources is unlikely, therefore Officers have been working to deliver elements without Lottery funding, whilst developing a revised plan focusing around the key aspects which Members and previous consultation responses highlighted.
- 3.5 Construction of a new skate park was completed in December 2018 with the support of a group of young people who assisted with the consultation and design processes. The Council secured £50,000 from Sport England to install floodlights so the facility can be used during the winter. Installation of the floodlights was completed in May 2019 and they are fully operational.
- 3.6 The projects listed below form the basis of the new plan. The existing lay out of these facilities is detailed in Appendix A and the proposed new site layout is detailed in Appendix B.
 - Relocate and significantly expand the junior and toddler play offering to the existing tennis court area (3 courts), to create a destination level play facility that will attract people from across the communities of Leek and beyond.
 - Relocate the existing Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to provide a high quality, sport and recreation facility in close proximity to the new junior play area.
 - Consolidate and refurbish two tennis courts.
 - Improve access to John Hall Gardens from Brough Park to support and better connect the ongoing work with the mental health charity Rethink, who lease the site from SMDC.
 - Eradicate the invasive pygmy weed which exists in the lake using external contractors.
 - Complete approximately 2400 square meters of footpath resurfacing works to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
 - Engage external support to develop an improved and long term management plan for the lake, taking into consideration the circumstances set out in section 9 of this report.
- 3.7 To deliver the proposals it is estimated that £274,500 of additional capital funding and £10,000 of revenue funds will be required to deliver the project as

is detailed within this report. The financial implications are detailed further in section 12.

- 3.10 Proposals within the new plan to relocate the children's play area from the existing site adjacent to Brough Park Leisure Centre will also assist the Council in the future, should plans for a new swimming pool be progressed.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report links to Aim 4 in the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023, "To protect and improve the environment and respond to the climate emergency". It particularly focuses on the key objective for the "Provision of quality parks and open spaces". "The development of a plan to improve Brough Park and John Hall Garden" is listed as a stand alone project to deliver the objective.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are two principle options:-

- To agree to the new proposed plan for Brough Park and John Hall Gardens as set out in the report and deliver the schedule of works with additional capital and revenue funds as requested. **(Recommended)**
- Do nothing **(Not recommended)**

- 5.2 A further option which Officers considered but discounted would have involved relocating the children's play area to the existing tennis court area but not relocating the MUGA. It is viewed that this would create a fractured offering, leaving the tennis courts located in different areas of the park.

6. Implications

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

Improvements to the open spaces and recreational facilities will increase the use of the site, helping to create a safe environment. The involvement and support of the local community will demonstrate that the open space is protected and cared for which will hopefully deter nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

6.2 Workforce

The site will need to be maintained by our workforce who are shortly due to transfer into AES after installation to ensure its safe condition. There will be more play items to be monitored and this will have an increase on the duration of the safety checks. Although the new equipment will require less repair and maintenance than the current old equipment.

- 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment
The facilities will be available to the whole community to use. There will be a requirement within the specification for play equipment to include a proportion of inclusive and accessible equipment so that it is available for children with disabilities.
- 6.4 Financial Considerations
Capital: The proposals as set out in 12.1 require additional capital investment of £274,500 above the current approved capital budget for Brough Park. The extra resources subject to member approval have been incorporated into the Council's latest Medium Term Financial Plans

Revenue implications: These will be met from within existing budgets

Further details given in section 12.
- 6.5 Legal
There are no legal implications at this stage.
- 6.6 Sustainability
Undertaking the play area project will improve the future use of the site and provide an improved offering to both the community and visitors. The new equipment will have a likely life-time of at least 15 to 20 years.
- 6.7 Consultation
Public consultation exercises previously undertaken in preparation of the Heritage Lottery Funding bid showed the improvement of the play area to have the highest demand from the public.

Further consultation would be undertaken to help determine the designs for the proposed new play area, including engaging the local community and the Friends of Brough Park.
- 6.8 Risk Assessment
The Playground Inspector has been highlighting the poor quality of the current play equipment for many years. The equipment has been repaired many times and in some places completely removed due to its age and general state of repair.

ANDREW P STOKES

Executive Director (Transformation) and Chief Finance Officer

Web Links and

Background Papers

5.12.17 Cabinet Report Brough Park Masterplan Exercise & Heritage Lottery Fund Bid
24.1.18 Service Delivery O & S Panel report Brough Park Masterplan Exercise & Heritage Lottery Fund Bid

Contact details

Robert Wilks
Principal Officer (Leisure and Recreation)
robert.wilks@highpeak.gov.uk

7. Detail

- 7.1 Plans for an improved Brough Park have been in development for a number of years. In December 2017 Cabinet approved an ambitious plan which involved the creation of a park masterplan (Appendix A) as part of a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This approval included provision of a capital contribution of £200,000 as match funding to help deliver the proposed scheme.
- 7.2 The application to the National Lottery was unsuccessful and soon after, the funding stream was pulled from its portfolio, leaving this project considerably short of the amount required to complete and unable to be progressed.
- 7.3 New funding streams have since been announced by the National Lottery, however the criteria of these do not lend themselves to a future application by the Council towards this project.
- 7.4 Securing the remaining amount needed to deliver all aspects of the masterplan from external sources is unlikely therefore Officers have been working to deliver elements of the masterplan without Lottery funding whilst developing a revised plan focusing around the key aspects which Members and previous consultation responses highlighted.
- 7.5 Construction of a new skate park was completed in December 2018 with the support of a group of young people who assisted with the consultation and design processes. The Council secured £50,000 from Sport England to install floodlights so the facility can be used during the winter. Installation of the floodlights was completed in May 2019 and they are fully operational.
- 7.6 The skate park was constructed using a location different to that detailed in the Masterplan as this was deemed to be the most appropriate position by the contractors. This means that the areas identified on the original Masterplan for the junior and toddler play areas are no longer viable and as such, the proposed location for the new play areas reflects this.
- 7.7 The projects listed below form the basis of the new plan. The existing lay out of these facilities is detailed in Appendix A and the proposed site layout for these improvements is detailed in Appendix B.
- Relocate and significantly expand the junior and toddler play offering to the existing tennis court area (3 courts), to create a destination level play facility that will attract people from across the communities of Leek and beyond.
 - Relocate the existing Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to provide a high quality, sport and recreation facility in close proximity to the new junior play area.
 - Consolidate and refurbish two tennis courts.

- Improve access to John Hall Gardens from Brough Park to support and better connect the ongoing work with the mental health charity Rethink, who lease the site from SMDC.
- Eradicate the invasive pygmy weed which exists in the lake using external contractors
- Complete approximately 2400 square meters of footpath resurfacing works to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- Engage external support to develop an improved and long term management plan for the lake, taking into consideration the circumstances set out in section 9 of this report.

8. Play and Sports Facilities

- 8.1 Proposals to relocate the children's play and MUGA to the area currently containing 3 tennis courts would result in facilities focused mainly towards children and young people being grouped together, giving the space a clear identity, making them easier to locate and more practical when supervising children.
- 8.2 This location would allow the new play area to benefit from the current hardstanding tarmac surface, reducing costs and allowing a greater proportion of the budget to be spent on play equipment rather than surfacing. Utilising this area would also provide better access, and would enable both toddler and junior play provision to be located together.
- 8.3 It is proposed that the existing tennis court next to the bowling green (number 4) and the old MUGA court be resurfaced with new fencing installed and tennis court line markings applied. These courts would serve the recreational game where people could try the sport informally before moving on to tennis clubs within the local area.
- 8.4 The relocation of the play area from its current location will assist the Council in the future should plans for a new swimming pool be progressed given the close proximity and the limited space available for any building expansion.
- 8.5 The existing play area and tennis courts are maintained by the Council's grounds maintenance team who are soon to transfer to AES and Glendale respectively, meaning that contract variations would need to be issued once the proposed facilities are completed in order to reflect the changes including increases to safety inspections, repairs and general maintenance.
- 8.6 Community engagement exercises will take place in order to help identify the type of play equipment and design local people would like to see in the new facility

9. Lake

- 9.1 The lake in Brough Park suffers from poor quality inflow rates and retaining the overall water level is primarily reliant on a direct feed from a mains water supply. This, in part, leads to poor water circulation and as a result, high quantities of silt build up.
- 9.2 Partial removal of silt last occurred in 2010 when approximately 1/3 of the lake was cleared by external contractors at a cost £6,000. An estimate from the contractor at the time to clear the whole lake was between £45,000 - £55,000.
- 9.3 Silt build up remains an issue and is now reaching a point whereby removal will be required within the next two years. Before this point is reached, the long term management of the lake needs to be reviewed in order to identify whether better systems of maintenance could be implemented to improve its quality, investigate whether reoccurring costs to desilt the lake can either be reduced or avoided or a plan for regular desilting put in place to avoid unplanned requests for large amounts of revenue funding.
- 9.4 It is proposed that we engage external support to deliver a full feasibility study which explores these issues in more detail. A further report will be provided once this study has been completed with a clear set of recommendations.
- 9.5 An ecological study of the lake conducted in 2018 identified there is an issue with New Zealand pygmy weed, an invasive weed which has a detrimental effect on the quality of the lake. It was recommended that this be removed. It is estimated this removal will cost in the region of £5,000, this sum is included within the scope of the works set out in 3.8.
- 9.6 In addition to works already identified, reinstatement work to the banks of the lake are required in places. It would be sensible to undertake these at the same time as other works are undertaken, unless they become unsafe in which case they will need to be addressed sooner. An estimated capital investment of these works is £10,000.

10. John Hall Gardens

- 10.1 John Hall Gardens are situated in the North East corner of Brough Park. They are contained within what was once the walled garden associated with the former Ball Haye Hall. The Gardens are occupied by The National Schizophrenia Fellowship trading as Rethink Mental Illness under a lease.
- 10.2 The Walled Garden while being well placed within the Park is disconnected from it. The main access is via Fowlchurch Road which is less than ideal with users of the Household Waste Recycling Site and the Council's own street sweeping and refuse vehicles crossing the entrance to access the waste transfer station at the end of the road. Equally people accessing the park via the path to the western side of the gardens have no footway and have to use the road surface in competition with vehicles.

- 10.3 As part of wider conversations with Rethink, both parties have together identified an updated set of improvements which would help connect John Hall Gardens to Brough Park and improve access and safety features within the facility. These improvements are listed below;
- Creating a new entry through the wall at John Hall gardens on the southern elevation of the gardens, including gates and access path.
 - Create a new path to the northern frontage of the gardens to allow pedestrian access without the need to use Fowlchurch Road to reduce pedestrian/vehicle interactions.
 - Erection of fence or railings to both water features within the gardens (pond and well) and should sums permit, other minor works within the gardens.
- 10.4 Part of the Council's vision for the park is to have some form of catering and/or associated retail option available to park users. John Hall Gardens already offer plant sales and some food and drink options, albeit both are limited due to the physical presence of the charity itself being limited and due to the basic nature of the on-site kitchen. These provisions do provide the underpinning facilities, if expanded in terms of availability and accessibility from Brough Park, would help meet the Council's aspirations for the park and its users.
- 10.5 Discussions are continuing with Rethink in regards to the lease for John Hall Gardens. At present rental costs have been forgone on the basis that Rethink invest into the building and undertake improvement works to the office and kitchen areas. A separate report will be provided to the relevant committee reviewing the future plans for the lease.

11. Footpaths

- 11.1 Brough Park has a large network of tarmacadam footpaths, which allow users to navigate around the site in all weathers. An assessment has been carried out to identify the general condition of these footpaths and it has shown that sections totalling approximately 2400 square meters are in either poor or very poor condition and are in need of resurfacing.
- 11.2 Given that footpaths are subject to constant wear and tear, it is proposed that resurfacing works to sections deemed poor and very poor are undertaken within the scope of this project, in order to ensure they remain in a safe and useable condition. An approximate budget figure to complete this work is included in section 12.1.

12. Financial Implications

- 12.1 To deliver the proposals as detailed within this report, additional funds are required. The table below sets out the estimated capital and revenue funding required to deliver each element of the new plan alongside the proposed timescale for delivery.

Project	Cost estimate (capital)	Cost estimate (revenue)	Timescale
New toddler and junior play area	£130,000		By August 2020
Relocate MUGA and Tennis Courts	£70,000		By August 2020
John Hall Garden access	£50,000		By 31 st March 2021
Lake feasibility study		£5,000	By 31 st March 2021
Removal of pygmy weed		£5,000	By 31 st March 2021
Reinstatement of lake banks	£10,000		By 31 st March 2021
Signage and landscaping	£10,000		By 31 st March 2021
Footpath resurfacing works	£150,000		By 31 st March 2021
Sub total	£420,000	£10,00	
Remaining capital sum	-£130,000		
MHCLG	-£15,500		
Total funding shortfall	£274,500	£10,000	

- 12.2 We propose to deliver each element of the project in a phased approach, taking into account available financial and staff resources. All costs provided are indicative and may be subject to change following formal tender processes being completed.
- 12.3 In 2019, the Council received a one off capital funding award of £15,460 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to improve local park infrastructure. It is planned to use this towards delivering the proposals above.
- 12.4 A range of suppliers have been approached in order to gain as much certainty as possible as to the potential costs associated to delivering the plan. Should the improvement plan gain approval and allocate funds as requested, Officers will undertake procurement exercises for each element of works to ensure the Council achieves best value.
- 12.5 As is detailed in section 9 of this report, a feasibility study is proposed in order to provide a future plan to address the ongoing issue of silt build up within the lake. It is envisaged that the study will provide a range of options for consideration in order to prevent future silt build up. It is though likely that silt removal would still be required, costings for which will need to be obtained. A further report will be provided detailing the options available to us and the associated financial implications.