

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
20 March 2012

Subject: RECREATIONAL LAND AT SOUTH WEST THIRSK (SOWERBY)

**Sowerby and Thirsk Wards
Scrutiny Committees
Cabinet Member for Leisure and Health: Councillor P Wilkinson**

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

1.1 As part of the new developments for the housing site in South West Thirsk (Sowerby) currently proceeding through the planning process there are a number of components:-

- Low cost housing;
- On-site children's equipped play;
- On-site public open space;
- On-site cycleways;
- On-site public art;
- Road and other infrastructure;
- Schools;
- Community facilities – including shops;
- Off-site recreational facilities.

1.2 This report focuses solely on the final item in the list 'off-site recreational facilities'.

2.0 DECISIONS SOUGHT:

2.1 The decision sought relates to agreeing the principle of how the implementation of the off-site recreational facilities is dealt with.

3.0 CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS:

3.1 The Council is currently negotiating as part of the planning process for the developer to provide 20 acres of land in exchange for a peppercorn. This is on the basis that over the last 2 years the Council has consulted the community on recreational needs which together with LDF consultation results has led to an evidenced needs assessment of:-

- 2 junior football pitches;
- 2 senior rugby pitches;
- Associated changing facilities;
- Allotments/community garden;
- Youth centre;
- Perimeter off road mountain bike course;
- Associated car/cycle parking;
- Provision of utility services.

3.2 The draft estimate for implementing this schedule is £1.5 million which the developer has agreed to provide up front, together with the land referred to above.

3.3 The immediately adjacent Secondary School is keen to explore extending joint use arrangements of the above in exchange for opening up school facilities to the public.

4.0 LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

4.1 The project links to the Council's priorities on health and children and young people.

5.0 OPTIONS:

5.1 There are options for how the Council may wish to proceed with the implementation of this, but the vision is that a single voluntary organisation ultimately manages and sustains the new facilities locally and to achieve this we need to engage the various stakeholders including the Parish Council in the process of planning, design, construction and management.

5.2 There are three options in pursuing this:-

1. The Council takes the land and the funding and delivers everything directly itself.
2. The developer implements the scheme and hands the completed product over to a community group.
3. A hybrid, where the Council takes the lead but the developer delivers specific aspects of the scheme at the same time as it develops the housing site.

5.3 It is considered that Option 1 is the best approach, it has a series of advantages:-

- Additional funding opportunities;
- Better community engagement;
- More flexibility regarding facilities and delivery timescales; and
- Greater control and certainty of finance and delivery.

5.4 There will be some disadvantages, mainly around the staff time involved in managing the process.

5.5 The Council is able to top slice some of the £1.5m implementation funding to pay for project managing the delivery of this and it is suggested that this would both be the most effective method in delivering outcomes, but would also give the Council good opportunities for positive communications in relation to the development of the site as a whole.

5.6 Although there are resources within the Council with the skills to project manage the delivery of this they are all fully committed over the next 12 months.

5.7 The learning from this project needs to be stored for applying to the North Northallerton Development Area project.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

6.1 There will be some risk associated with delivering this project but at this stage it is the principle of how we implement the scheme that is being considered and the risk of this decision is considered to be low.

6.2 It is intended that a more detailed report be brought back to Members once proposals for implementation are drafted.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 The project will have financial sustainability built into it by utilising part of the £1.5m as a development/repair and renewal fund.

7.2 The project will be handed over to a voluntary organisation upon completion.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND EFFICIENCIES:

8.1 The project will deliver within budget and make provision for future sustainability.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

9.1 The approach suggested here is subject to satisfactory completion of the planning obligation with the developer. There will be the normal legal implications of developing facilities on land (eg contractual, property related).

10.0 SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998:

10.1 This project will provide positive engagement for children and young people once completed.

11.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:

11.1 The promotion of equality and diversity will be built into the project.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

12.1 It is recommended that:-

- 1) the Council leads the implementation of this project; and
- 2) external support be sought to help take this forward and up to £20,000 be utilised from the £1.5 million developer contribution to expedite this.

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Background papers: None

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Diagram TM2

