

BRADBOURNE LAKES - SEVENOAKS

Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 9 October 2018

Report of Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services

Status For decision.

Also considered by Cabinet - 11 October 2018

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: This report provides details of the results of the Public Consultation carried out in August 2018 on 'The vision for Bradbourne Lakes' and recommends a way forward to try and obtain external funding for improvement and restoration works to the lakes.

This report supports the Key Aim of a green and healthy environment.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Matthew Dickins

Contact Officer Ian Finch, Ext. 7407

Recommendation to Advisory Committee: That it be recommended to Cabinet:-

- (a) That the results of the Public Consultation be noted and that Land Use Consultants (LUC) be commissioned to develop a full vision costed plan and to explore external funding opportunities and to submit various grant applications to fund the proposed improvement and restoration works.
- (b) To fund this Consultancy work a 'one-off' 'invest to save', growth item for the 2019/20 budget be considered as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process. (Estimated cost £60,000).

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) That the results of the Public Consultation be noted and that Land Use Consultants (LUC) be commissioned to develop a full vision costed plan and to explore external funding opportunities and to submit various grant applications to fund the proposed improvement and restoration works.
 - (b) To fund this work a 'one-off' 'invest to save' growth item for the 2019/20 budget to be considered as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process (estimated cost £60,000).
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Reason for recommendation: The results of the Public Consultation has identified the Community vision for the future of Bradbourne Lakes. To achieve this vision substantial expenditure is required for the improvement and restoration works. Such expenditure is outside the Council's ten year budget and therefore external funding will need to be applied for to wholly or partly fund the required works, to implement the vision.

Introduction and Background

- 1 At your Committee Meeting on 11 July 2017 a report was presented on the condition of the Council owned Bradbourne Lakes, and suggested a possible way forward to obtain external funding for restoration works. It was resolved that:
 - (a) The principle of the 'one-off' 'invest to save' application was supported.
 - (b) To secure the best possible outcome the Advisory Committee considered that it was essential to have a robust vision in advance of exploring funding options.
 - (c) Further investigation by the Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder was required to find out costings and funding for (b) above and
 - (d) The Portfolio Holder inform Cabinet of the above.
- 2 Two representatives of the Bradbourne Residents Association (BRA) were also allowed to address the Committee.

Vision for Bradbourne Lakes

- 3 Following this meeting, Land Use Consultants (LUC) were commissioned to prepare a vision document for the future of the lakes for consultation with the wider community.
- 4 Appendix A is the vision document prepared with the consultation responses detailed on pages 40-44.
- 5 The consultation took place between 9 and 24 August, with an online survey on the Council's website and two consultation events took place at the Lakes on 9 and 11 August.
- 6 The survey sheet is reproduced at Appendix B.
- 7 Jennette Emery-Wallis from LUC will attend the meeting to give a short presentation on the vision and the headline results of the consultation.

Consultation Headline Results

- 8 The full consultation outcomes are detailed on pages 40-44 of Appendix A, however, below are some headline results for information.

Total number of respondents - 110.

- 40 (36%) respondents visit the lake daily.
- 93 (84%) respondents travelled 0-2 miles to visit the lake.
- 96 (87%) respondents felt de-silting the lake was a top priority. Other priorities were repair of lake edges and broken structures and repair and joining up of eroded paths.
- 96 (87%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed to be supportive of the vision for the lakes.
- 52 (47%) respondents thought removal of overgrown vegetation is a priority.
- 27 (24%) of respondents thought ecological enhancements and biodiversity improvements were a priority.
- 26 (23%) respondents thought new facilities such as toilets or a play area were a priority.
- 2 (2%) respondents thought new signage and history trails were a priority.

Background

- 9 The historic heritage of the lakes are well documented and detailed in the vision report prepared by LUC. It is recognised that the lakes are already a little oasis in a busy market town, particularly on a fine day, and was recently recognised 'as one of the 20 greatest places to have a picnic in Kent'.
- 10 Comparisons are sometimes being drawn in some quarters with Dunorlan in Tunbridge Wells or Crowborough boating pond, however, the Bradbourne Lakes are of a different nature and direct comparisons with ornamental style urban located parks would be incorrect.
- 11 The Council, has for a number of years, sought to maintain, with volunteers' assistance, the natural environments of the lakes and have over the last few years invested in maintenance of the lakes operation and erected new fencing and benches. Budgets are limited and there is only so much that can be done within existing resources. Hence the need for external funding sources to deliver many of the improvements identified in the vision.
- 12 It is clear from the Consultation results that the majority of visitors already live close to the lakes, but that is not to say, visitors would travel further if the lakes were enhanced.

- 13 The Consultation identifies the de-silting of the lakes as a top priority, with repair of lake edges and repairs to paths also being a high priority.
- 14 There was less support for the provision of a toilet, café, a children's play area or outdoor gyms.
- 15 Any restoration works, if funding is sourced, would need to be carefully planned to ensure improvements are delivered in an holistic and considered manner, prioritised to obtain the best outcomes for the funding that could be made available.
- 16 It needs to be fully borne in mind, however, that any improvements, and any new facilities provided, will have on-going maintenance liability for the Council. Therefore, any improvements delivered need to have consideration for future maintenance costs.

Key Implications

Financial

The funding for the priority works identified in the vision for Bradbourne Lakes is outside the Council's ten year budget and therefore external funding will need to be applied for to wholly or partially fund the required works to implement the vision.

A 'one-off', 'invest to save' budget would allow the commissioning of LUC to explore external funding opportunities and to submit various grant applications to fund the implementation of the vision.

On-going maintenance liabilities for the Council also need to be fully taken into account in any improvement programme.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Without assistance from external funding the vision cannot be implemented for the lakes, however, priority works, such as de-silting, will be essential in the near future, to ensure the correct functioning of the lakes, and again, the estimated cost of these works are outside the Council's ten year budget.

There is no guarantee, however, that any application for external funding will be successful, and this is a significant risk to the implementation of the vision.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

Obtaining external funding to wholly or partially support the improvement and restoration works identified in the vision will be the greatest opportunity to deliver

the desired outcomes. LUC have identified numerous organisations they could bid to provide the necessary funding to deliver the desired outcomes identified through the vision consultation, although there is no guarantee of success.

Appendices

Appendix A - Bradbourne Lakes - A vision for the future - prepared by LUC - August 2018

Appendix B - Consultation Survey Sheet

Richard Wilson
Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services