

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Lisa Hyde – Executive Director	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> A17/056	
Wards Affected	William Knibb		
Title	TOWN CENTRE DELIVERY PLAN - MEADOW ROAD URBAN PARK - ART & CULTURE REVITALISED		

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mark Dearing

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To appraise members of the work being undertaken on two projects included in the Town Centre Delivery Plan 2018-2025, Meadow Road Urban Park and Art & Culture Revitalised to proceed with the consultation proposed and approve the spend of Section 106 monies specifically allocated to Town Centre improvements for the delivery of the projects.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Town Centre Conference in September 2017 led to the Development of the Town Centre Delivery Plan 2018-2025. The conference included a range of workshops and sessions where attendees could feed in their priorities, ideas and views re the future development of the Town Centre.
- 2.2 There were 19 projects identified across the short, medium and long term, as well as a range of ongoing projects and actions to support the vitality of the Town Centre.
- 2.3 The Delivery Plan recognises the changing nature of town centres and, although still important shopping and retail space, there is a real need to reflect that the balance is changing to places where people will also live, work and enjoy their leisure time. This mixture of uses will, over time, create safe, adaptable and more resilient town centres.
- 2.4 The two delivery projects of 'Meadow Road Park' and 'Art and Culture Revitalised', covered in this report, contribute towards the broader view of the town centre becoming a wider community hub that incorporates health, housing, education, arts, entertainment and work places.

3.0 PLANS FOR MEADOW ROAD PARK

- 3.1 Attendees at the Town Centre Conference identified the huge potential of Meadow Road Park and how it could be improved to complement the Town Centre offer. It was identified as a large, relatively unused, green space and a great opportunity to provide play equipment, seating areas, events areas and playing pitches adjacent to Northfield Avenue. Attendees also considered how the top of Meadow Road could be enhanced to provide a more obvious gateway to the park, thereby encouraging more use.

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- 3.2 Meadow Road Park sits within the town centre environs and is already a destination park, with the existing play area that is now due for replacement. The space has many existing features that very much work in its favour, such as a good range of mature trees, useful topography to the land and good communication links with the town centre and car parks. Presently, the space feels divided into two disparate areas, Meadow Road public open space and Westfield Memorial Garden. This proposal could see a formal establishment of a new more combined single park space.
- 3.3 The vision is to develop the park as a key destination area for the town. Current footfall measures show that over a fifteen minute weekdays lunchtime period in September, between 33 and 45 people use Meadow Road to access/exit the town centre. It was also observed that on one of the days there were 7 people using the park, and on the other there were zero. Improvements to the park will be designed to increase this footfall, increase dwell time and encourage more people to visit the town centre.
- 3.4 An overall visual for the park is attached to this report at **Appendix A**; this will be split across two phases for delivery. **Phase 1** could include: -
- An extensive all new children's play area covering ages 0 to 13 years. This will be split into a toddler play area and a junior play area.
 - A fitness zone for teens and young people
 - Outdoor gym equipment for adults
 - A hard standing area for the opportunity for temporary concessions to sell tea, coffee, refreshments
 - Extensive landscaping and planting
 - New pathways and built features
 - Improved lighting
 - Seating/ benches
 - Improved signage to the park in the Town Centre
 - Entrance feature
 - Treatment of periphery of park to secure and prevent entry of unauthorised vehicles.
 - Planting and improvements to the top of Meadow Road
 - Pitch markings for informal games.
- 3.5 **Phase 2** relates to the Northfield Avenue side of the park where the Slade Brook runs alongside the edge of the park. This part of the project is subject to external funding for projects for green infrastructure improvements.
- 3.6 The proposal is to enhance and make more of a feature of the Slade Brook corridor adjacent to Northfield Avenue, by removing one side of the culvert creating more water flow channels that will create a new ditch into the park with stepped banking and natural vegetation. This will create new wildlife habitation and create space for children's play such as pond dipping, education and using the water as a feature in an area for quiet contemplation.

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4.0 ART & CULTURE REVITALISED AT THE GALLERY, LIBRARY AND MUSEUM (GLAM)

- 4.1 The Town Centre Delivery Plan includes a project that commits the Council to work with local groups and artists on local outdoor public art and cultural events in key town centre locations, including the museum and gallery.
- 4.2 This Council and First for Wellbeing (Library / NCC) have been collaborating since the summer to try to strengthen the heritage, cultural and creative offer within the Town Centre to provide the following benefits: -
- Reinvent GLaM as the new creative and cultural anchor for North Northamptonshire
 - Create a visitor destination
 - Foster and support creative industry start-ups by providing creative pods, business support and equipment
 - Increase exhibition space, supporting local artists
 - Secure capital investment to redefine assets (physically connect them to become one and improve existing facilities)
 - Develop new income generating activities (bistro / café, retail, weddings, community and corporate events)
- 4.3 In October, an expression of interest was submitted to the Local Growth Fund requesting capital investment to support the delivery of project GLaM in two phases; the first focusing on the library and gallery and the second physically connecting the museum. It will be announced in December if the expression is successful to the final stage.
- 4.4 In the meantime, there will be a requirement to spend some time developing and moving the project from concept to a robust project outline and feasibility study. The aim of the feasibility work is that it will inform any future funding application, not just the Local Growth Fund bid, with a business case.
- 4.5 The feasibility brief will concentrate on the following: -
- Physical offering of the sites
 - Market demand
 - Options and costs
 - Commercial viability
- 4.6 This is an initial feasibility study and will be quite high-level; however, it will need to include some initial drawings to better understand the development opportunities. Indicative costings for this work range from £10,000 to £15,000, which can be delivered using the S106 monies.

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5. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

- 5.1 As stated in paragraph 2.1 of this report, the opportunities for the development of the park were initiated from the attendees of the Town Centre conference. The next stage of consultation is an important aspect in refining and developing the ideas that have been developed.
- 5.2 Significant local consultation will now be undertaken, to seek the views of local people to shape the development of this space. As the project has various audiences and stakeholders, the consultation plan proposes to cover the following:
- Play equipment– work with a local school to involve young people to develop the themes and ideas.
 - Outdoor gym equipment – talk to users of existing outdoor gyms across the town, to identify preferences and assess demand in the Meadow Road area
 - Development of the park overall – hand deliver letters and a survey to local residents to explain the vision, seek their views and identify any concerns.
 - Existing park users – see views on site through completion of a survey.
 - Promote the consultation through the Councils social media channels and press and media encouraging local response.
- 5.3 The time line is to begin the various consultation exercise as soon as possible and prior to Christmas. This will allow the time for the feedback to influence the plans to be drawn together and for work to begin on Phase One in the New Year, delivering the new park by Spring/Summer 2019.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP), adopted July 2011, sets out aspirations for the town centre up to 2021. The vision for the town centre is to create a vibrant heart for Kettering, a place that is characterful, distinctive and fun. Policy 13 (*Open Space, Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity*) of the AAP proposes the Plan will deliver a network of linked, high quality, attractive, and usable open spaces. It advocates the reappropriation of the open space at Meadow Road Recreation Ground into a high quality urban park; retaining and enhancing Westfield Gardens; providing a high quality replacement children's play area; and improving pedestrian and cyclist connectivity. The vision in the AAP for The New Residential Quarter, the area in which the Meadow Road Park lies, includes providing "high quality...open spaces together with a rejuvenated waterside along the Slade Brook."

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- 6.2 The Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan, agreed by the Planning Policy Committee on 27th March 2018, identifies a waterside sensitive urban design feature for the Meadow Road Park, within a broader Slade Brook GI project that runs north to south through Kettering and its town centre.
- 6.3 Policy 5 (*Culture, Tourism and Leisure*) of the AAP states that proposals for additional cultural and tourism facilities will be encouraged to enhance the current provision
- 6.4 The two projects described within this report support the visions and conform with policies contained within the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan.

7. FINANCIAL RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As stated above, the projects are to be funded by Section 106 monies specified for Town Centre improvements. Up to this financial year, £300,000 of this has been collected, with a further £60,000 to be collected in July 2019.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the consultation process on the improvement plans for Meadow Road Park are progressed as outlined above.
- 10.2 That the S106 monies allocated for Town Centre Improvements are used for the Meadow Road Park improvements and the feasibility study for the GLaM project as part of the Town Centre Delivery Plan.

Background Papers:

Title

Date

Contact Officer