

<b>Cabinet</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	3 February 2016
<b>Report Title</b>	Faversham Recreation Ground – Proposed Heritage Lottery Fund Bid
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr David Simmons, Cabinet Member for Environment & Rural Affairs
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Abdool Kara
<b>Head of Service</b>	Dave Thomas
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Graeme Tuff
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To agree the draft Master Plan</li> <li>2. To support the proposal to make appropriate Heritage Lottery Fund and other external funding bids</li> </ol>

## **1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks formal agreement to the Council proceeding with a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for approximately £1.6 million in order to improve Faversham Recreation Ground.
- 1.2 The Recreation Ground, which was laid out in 1860, is owned by Faversham Municipal Charities, and is leased to Swale Borough Council under a 50 year lease dated August 2010. The lease requires certain improvement works to be undertaken and, following receipt of a number of site-specific Section 106 developer contributions, it was considered that the best approach was to take the opportunity to refresh the somewhat tired park for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by incorporating the desired improvements.
- 1.3 In order to fulfil the ambition of a large improvement project, significant external funding will also be required from major contributors, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, in addition to the developer contributions.
- 1.4 Allen Scott Landscape Architects were appointed in 2014 to undertake consultation and develop a master plan for the Recreation Ground, in preparation for a Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Faversham Recreation Ground is located on Whitstable Road in the centre of Faversham, and sitting within the Conservation Area it is the most significant formal urban open space in the Faversham area at approximately 20 acres. It was created in 1860 through a bequest by Henry Wreight and subscriptions from local townspeople.

- 2.2 The Recreation Ground is laid out with a central grass area bounded by wide promenades lined with lime trees. A number of buildings are present on site, including a Victorian keeper's lodge leased to Faversham Rugby Club, a changing pavilion, public toilets, and two timber pavilions used by Faversham Bowls and Tennis Clubs respectively. A number of local sports clubs use the three football pitches and single rugby pitch for grass root team sports, and there is also a play area, small skatepark, and a ball court.
- 2.3 The Council has a fifty year lease from Faversham United Municipal Charities dated 26 August 2010. This requires the Council to undertake improvement works such as fencing, providing a replacement bandstand or similar performance space, and the introduction of improved parking controls. Preliminary work and budget allocation to these specific items indicate that, if necessary, it would be possible to deliver these improvements from the Section 106 contributions already received.
- 2.4 The Council appointed Allen Scott Landscape Architects in 2014 in order to develop the project, undertake consultation and design a masterplan, with the ultimate aim of submitting applications for external funding.

### **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 Following both stakeholder and public consultation Allen Scott has developed a masterplan reproduced as Annex I. The proposal includes:
- new metal fencing on the boundary of Whitstable Road and Park Road;
  - refurbishment of the main changing pavilion and toilet block;
  - development of a retail café/kiosk;
  - refurbishment of the exterior of the Lodge;
  - improvements to both the play area and skatepark;
  - reinstatement of some areas of historical planting and hard features;
  - resolving the historical parking issues;
  - undertaking a tree survey and instigating appropriate management;
  - creating an outdoor performance space;
  - addressing issues of poor lighting where appropriate;
  - repairing the historical footpath network; and
  - a volunteer and activity programme.
- 3.2 The Council has received £274,000 specifically for Faversham Recreation Ground from various Section 106 developer contributions, and it is proposed to use this to develop and match-fund a bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for a project valued at £1.9m.

- 3.3 We will also attempt to secure other external funding, such as landfill tax credits, and from partners such as sporting governing bodies, Municipal Charities, and Faversham Town Council.
- 3.4 The proposed HLF submission will be a two stage bid: the first will be to undertake surveys, cost and develop the project (9 months), before a second stage bid that will enable the delivery of the project. It is envisaged that this will be a two year project in all, and that the related volunteer/activity elements and enhanced site maintenance will be funded for a further five years thereafter.
- 3.5 While development of the project continues, it is broadly anticipated by our consultants that future maintenance costs will be neutral. The improvements will provide new infrastructure with ten-plus years life, reducing current repair and maintenance costs, while income from the proposed café will off-set other additional costs, such as more extensive planting.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 It would be possible to seek to undertake as many of the improvements required by the lease as possible from the developer contributions already collected by the Council. However, it is considered that this would be a missed opportunity to undertake the more extensive improvements desired by the community and other stakeholders.

#### **5. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 Scott Allen undertook a stakeholder event at the Alexander Centre in late 2014, followed up with individual communication with sports clubs, Municipal Charities, and other local groups. Public consultation in the form of an exhibition and feedback forms was also used to develop the proposed masterplan.
- 5.2 Faversham United Municipal Charities, the owners of the Recreation Ground, have formally approved the proposed masterplan.

#### **6. Implications**

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Making Swale A Better Place – improving leisure facilities and open space.</p> <p>A Borough To Be Proud Of – will improve the Boroughs’ tourism offer.</p> <p>A Community To Be Proud Of – will encourage volunteering and community activity</p> <p>A Council To Be Proud Of – will improve perception of customers’</p>

	experiences.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>The total proposed project costs are £1.9m including fees and contingency.</p> <p>The Council currently has £274,000 of Section 106 developer contributions allocated to the project, which will act as the match funding for any external funding bids.</p> <p>It is proposed to bid for £1.6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other external funding sources.</p> <p>While at a very early stage of development, a proportion of on-going additional maintenance costs will be covered for the first five years through external funding, with potential additional income from the proposed kiosk/café. Thereafter additional resources may be required, although we would expect the repair and maintenance requirements of the new and improved facilities to be limited.</p>
Legal and Statutory	In addition to improving the general facilities in the Recreation Ground, the project has the aim of satisfying the requirements of the 2010 lease.
Crime and Disorder	The plans will reflect the desire for the site to be more secure, and consultation will be undertaken through development and the planning process. Improvements to the landscape and consideration of appropriate lighting, along with increased footfall and community activity, all have the potential to reduce ASB.
Sustainability	Refurbishment of buildings will provide the potential to incorporate service technologies, with the aim of reducing both costs and the use of resources, as well as carbon emissions.
Health and Wellbeing	If successful, volunteer and activity coordination, along with improvements to sports facilities, will encourage participation. Improving the quality of the landscape encourages use of the space for passive enjoyment, and can contribute to mental health and well-being.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	If successful, this is a major project which will incorporate appropriate risk, and health and safety management. The main risk revolves around the construction phase, and particularly works to the buildings where issues of asbestos etc. will need to be considered.
Equality and Diversity	As the proposal is further developed additional work will be undertaken with communities and stakeholders to ensure the strength of the proposed bid, and that the whole community participate both in the development and delivery of the proposed improvements.

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: *Master Plan*

## **8 Background Papers**

8.1 None