

Cheltenham Borough Council**COUNCIL – 12 October 2009****Pittville Park****Report of Cabinet Member for Sustainability****1. Executive Summary and recommendation**

- 1.1** At its meeting of 17th March 2008 Council resolved that, should the Pittville Park Heritage Lottery Fund bid be unsuccessful, the allocation of existing capital funding be referred back to Council for further consideration.
- 1.2** Although it could be possible to submit a second bid there is increased risk that the necessary investment will not deliver tangible benefits. The council has made a significant investment in Pittville Park over the last 6 years and in some cases this has been delivered at the expense of other parks which are now badly in need of improvement. It is my belief that the available funding would be better used to deliver a guaranteed improvement to our parks and green open spaces based on an objective assessment of need.
- 1.3 I recommend that:**
- 1.3.1. Council resolve to allocate the £300,000 capital reserve ringfenced for the Pittville Park development scheme to the provisional investment schedule 5 detailed in this report.**

1.4 Summary of implications

- 1.4.1 Financial** The Council's Capital Strategy was approved by Council as part of the annual budget setting framework on 13th February 2009. Within the agreed Capital Programme was a sum of £300,000 earmarked as the Council's contribution towards the £4m HLF Pittville Park development scheme and was to be funded from the capital reserve or alternatively from capital receipts if they became available. In agreeing the Capital Strategy, Council can afford up to £200,000 per annum for new capital schemes. Releasing the Council's commitment of £300,000 towards the Pittville Scheme will ensure that £500,000 is available for allocation as part of the budget setting process for 2010/11.

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1.4.2 Legal

None arising directly from this report.

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1.4.3 Other

None arising directly from this report.

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1.5 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities.

- 1.5.1 Improving the environmental quality of our parks, gardens and green open spaces will contribute significantly to building healthy and stronger communities and improve the quality of life for all those who live in or visit the town.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 In March 2008 Cabinet recommended to Council that a £3 million bid be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Parks for People Programme for to fund a schedule of investment in Pittville Park. It was further proposed that the council contribute a further £1 million minimum to the project.
- 2.2 Following debate at Council it was resolved that a bid be prepared for HLF funding but, in the event of the bid being unsuccessful, the matter be referred back to Council to reconsider the allocation of the £1 million CBC contribution.
- 2.3 Officers, working closely with other stakeholder groups and in consultation with the South West HLF office, prepared a detailed bid which was submitted to HLF on 26th September 2008. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful. Feedback from the South West Office of HLF indicated that the bid was strong in all areas and that it was put forward as the highest priority for the region. When it was assessed nationally, despite maximising all the evidence available, the need for investment in the park was not considered as great as some of the other bidders who I understand represented large towns with high levels of deprivation.
- 2.4 In accordance with the Council's resolution of 17th March 2008 the allocation of the CBC contribution is now referred back to Council for further consideration.

3. Background

- 3.1 The report to Council on 17th March 2008 contained a funding strategy containing details of the proposed £1 million contribution from CBC. The strategy and the current position are outlined in the following paragraphs.
- 3.2 Qualifying Capital Expenditure - £190,000. This sum was ring fenced for investment in Pittville Park between September 2007 and September 2008. The actual spend

over this period was £173,037 and this is detailed in Schedule 2 later in this report.

- 3.3** Capital Reserve/Receipts - £300,000. This sum was ring fenced for investment in Pittville Park should the bid be successful and was earmarked to come from the sale proceeds from the development of Midwinter. As the economic conditions worsened, the development of Midwinter stalled and therefore the Pittville Park project required assurances that appropriate funds were allocated within its capital programme. At the budget setting meeting on 13th February 2009, Council agreed to allocate a sum of £300,000 from the capital reserve or future capital receipts. If the Council is minded to no longer support the Pittville Park development scheme then this sum of money is currently available for alternative uses within the Council's Capital Programme..
- 3.4** S106 Contributions - £200,000. It was anticipated that a large proportion of this sum would come from the development of the Midwinter site. As the development did not proceed as planned the funding is not available at this time.
- 3.5** External Partnership Funding - £10,000. It was considered appropriate that external groups be encouraged to raise funds and take ownership of the project in partnership with CBC. It is not known how much if any funding has been raised and in any case it is not for the council to allocate funding raised by external partners.
- 3.6** Existing Capital Budgets - £200,000. This was in fact £50,000 per annum over four years. This funding stream has historically been distributed across all parks and gardens according to need but was pooled to assist in the bid for Pittville Park.
- 3.7** Planned Maintenance Programme - £100,000. This represented the proportion of the council's long term planned maintenance budget. This will continue to be spent in Pittville Park on essential infrastructure maintenance.
- 3.8** Members can clearly see from the above paragraphs that, of the £1 million detailed in the funding strategy, only £300,000 is actually available for immediate allocation and investment.

4. The opportunity to submit a second bid to HLF.

- 4.1** The potential exists to resubmit under the new Parks for People programme. This programme is no longer jointly funded by the Big Lottery and consequently focuses only on heritage. There is, however, a bid currently being prepared for HLF funding for the Art Gallery and Museum (AGM). Whilst the AGM bid is being made to a separate HLF funding stream the advice from the South West Office of HLF has been that concurrent bids from the same authority might be considered to show a lack of strategic thinking and that the authority would need to demonstrate that they have the capacity to simultaneously deliver two major projects. The AGM Phase one application will be determined in December of this year and it is therefore conceivable that a Stage one application could be made for Pittville Park in mid 2010. Members should note however that a decision to submit a second bid will delay much needed investment in all parks and gardens, including Pittville. Even if successful, it would mean that at the earliest improvement works in Pittville Park would not commence until 2012/13. Given that the available funds have been in effect frozen since 2007 I believe that in this case action is needed sooner rather than later.
- 4.2** Changes to HLF criteria also make the option to submit a second bid less attractive. Previously while Stage one bids were highly competitive a pass at this stage meant that providing detailed specific information drawings/plans etc. were submitted at Stage two, a go ahead was certain with stage two bids being determined in collaboration with the bidder. Both stages are now competitive which requires greater

investment in preparing the bid and increases the impact of failure. Although much of the work completed for the failed bid can be re-used there is still a significant investment required to resubmit with an increased risk that the investment will come to nothing. Time and money would be better spent on delivering achievable and tangible improvements.

- 4.3** Furthermore, pre qualifying expenditure is no longer counted towards the funding contribution required from the bidder. This means that any investment made in the park between now and the bid could not be included in any funding strategy. I believe the above factors make a second bid a much less attractive option.
- 4.4** It is worth highlighting at this stage the level of investment that has been made in Pittville Park in recent years. The following three schedules detail the investment in Pittville Park between 2003 and the current financial year. In total a sum of £1,292,335 has been invested in, or is committed to, Pittville Park.

SCHEDULE 1 - Historical Spend 2003 -2007

		Cost £	Source
2003 - 2005	De-Silting programme	531,000	Capital Reserve
2004 - 2007	Removal of unsightly depot yard, toilet refurbishment, refurbish Central Cross Café & boathouse, resurface pathways, skateboard ramps, others.	339,298	Capital Reserve / Receipts
	TOTAL	870,298	

SCHEDULE 2 – Qualifying Capital Expenditure included in HLF BID 2007-2009

		Cost £	Source
2007/08	Re-furbish Agg-Gardner Pavilion	97,862	Gov't Grants and Property R&R Reserve
2007/08	Install Reed beds, Upper Lake	12,082	Capital Reserve
2007/08	Re-furbish Tennis Courts	25,437	Capital Reserve
2007/08	Improvements to lower lake, some de-silting, some refurbishment of play areas and boathouse, new seats, re-roof and upgrade aviaries.	37,656	Capital Reserve
	TOTAL	173,037	

SCHEDULE 3 - Works committed currently in year 2009/10

		Cost £	Source
2009/10	Improvements to Agg-Gardner with natural play areas etc	44,000	"Playbuilder" Grant
2009/10	Capital already allocated to Upper Lake Play area	45,000	CBC Capital
2009/10	New lower Lake footbridge a)	40,000	S/Trent Grant
2009/10	New lower Lake footbridge b)	35,000	Env Trust Grant
2009/10	New M.U.G.A. a) existing capital	20,000	CBC Capital
2009/10	New M.U.G.A. b)	10,000	S/Trent Grant
2009/10	New M.U.G.A. c)	10,000	S106 money
2009/10	Fishing platforms and seating	10,000	S/Trent Grant
	TOTAL	214,000	

- 4.5 In addition to this, the work detailed in schedule 4 is planned maintenance in Pittville park over the next 4 years.

SCHEDULE 4 - Possible Works from existing budgets 2010 - 2012 Refer also 3.6

		Cost ~£	Source
2010-12	Partial refurbishment of existing Agg-Gardner (conventional) play area.	15,000	Based on an existing budget which is £50,000 per annum for all parks and gardens (e.g 50% of budget)
2010-12	Improved signage including but not limited to directing people to lower lake facilities from upper lake area	15,000	
2010-12	Replace some seats e.g. where warped. Painting and repairing where necessary, going beyond immediate maintenance budget, and improved lighting in tunnel.	20,000	
	TOTAL	50,000	

- 4.6 Assuming schedule 4 is delivered in full, this brings the total spend on Pittville Park improvements to £1,307,335. This is a significant level of investment as befits one of our premier parks. It is, however, of note that this represents a high proportion of overall investment and has been delivered in some cases to the detriment of other parks and green open spaces.

5. Investment needs in other parks, gardens and green open spaces.

At my request officers have prepared a provisional schedule of investments based on assessed need across all our parks, gardens and green open spaces. This is shown below and is by no means exhaustive but it does provide members with an indication of the urgent need for investment in other parks, playing fields and green open spaces.

Schedule 5 - priority investment requirement for parks, gardens, sports fields and green open space.

Note : All estimates are indicative and for budget purposes only

SITE	DESCRIPTION	SUM £
Benhall Open Space	Improve access to Hatherley Brook, vegetation management to improve biodiversity, bound gravel stream side walk, benches and planting.	50,000
Brizen rec	Improve drainage on junior pitch.	30,000
Chargrove Lane Open Space	Increase biodiversity, native planting, meadow creation, fruit trees.	5,000
Hesters Way Park	Improve biodiversity, vegetation management, planting and meadow. Redesign old rose garden.	20,000
Imperial Gardens	Restore park to high quality around garden bar area, suitable for civic events and festivals, and repair/upgrade surfaces	100,000

Montpellier Gardens	CCTV camera, ducting already installed, subject to Police resources	25,000
Swindon Village Playing Field	Improve football pitch drainage.	30,000
		260,000

5.1 Given the risks associated with a second HLF bid, the level of investment in Pittville Park over a considerable number of years and the urgent need for investment in other parks and green open spaces, I recommend that members allocate the £300,000 reserve to the provisional programme detailed in schedule 5 above.

Background Papers

Cabinet 11th March 2008

Pittville Park HLF Bid

Council minutes 17th March 2008

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Accountability

Councillor Roger Whyborn,

Cabinet Member for Sustainability

Scrutiny Function

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee