

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 07 October 2024

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Fareham Park Vision Update
Report of:	Assistant Director (Democracy)
Corporate Priorities:	Leisure Opportunities for Wellbeing and Fun Strong, Safe and Healthy Communities

Purpose:

To inform the Executive of progress with the creation of a Masterplan for new leisure, community and recreation facilities at Fareham Park, to recommend the submission of an outline Planning Application to progress this plan and to highlight the financial challenges of achieving the Vision.

Executive summary:

In July 2022, the Executive received a report detailing plans to submit a Local Investment Plan to secure an allocation of the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the Borough.

The report confirmed the intention that this would include a community-led approach to developing a plan for the regeneration of the Fareham Park area, addressing the need for modern sporting, leisure and community facilities, and delivering essential new affordable homes.

Following support by the Government of the Council's Local Investment Plan, £1m was awarded to meet the Council's aspirations. Of this, £700,000 was allocated to creating the Masterplan for the Fareham Park area.

This report provides an update on progress with the Masterplan for Fareham Park. It details the consultation that has driven the plan to date, advises of the works that are scheduled to be completed from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation, considers the next step of the submission of an outline Planning Application for the new community facilities and reviews the financial requirements of delivering the project in its entirety.

Recommendation/Recommended Option:

It is recommended that the Executive: -

- a) notes the content of the report and supports the identified next steps;
- b) considers the comments of the Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel;
- c) agrees to the submission of the outline Planning Application to progress the Fareham Park Vision; and
- d) notes the financial challenges of delivering such a transformative project for the Fareham Park area.

Reason:

To agree the direction of the Fareham Park Vision and the approaches to funding the improvement proposals.

Cost of proposals:

The Council has allocated £1.75m from Section 106 developers' contributions reallocated from the Cams Alders Vision towards the leisure, community and recreation improvements to Fareham Park. It is anticipated that a further £2.15m will be required to deliver the Fareham Park Vision in its entirety.

Appendices:

A: Community Vision for Fareham Park
B: Site Options for Fareham Park

Background papers: UK Shared Prosperity Fund Executive Report, July 2022

Reference papers: Cams Alders Vision Conclusion, April 2023

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	07 October 2024
Subject:	Fareham Park Vision Update
Briefing by:	Assistant Director (Democracy)
Portfolio:	Leisure and Community

INTRODUCTION

1. The government launched its UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in 2022, as part of its Levelling Up agenda, providing £2.6 billion of funding intended to reduce inequalities between communities. Following a successful application, Fareham Borough Council was allocated a total of £1m.
2. In July 2022, the Council submitted a plan outlining how this funding would be used to reduce inequalities. Projects focused on supporting town centre regeneration, decarbonisation support for local businesses and improvements to Crossfell Walk play area. The main proposal focussed on the creation of a community-led Masterplan for much needed affordable housing alongside the first phase of works to improve the community, sport and leisure facilities on the open space at Henry Cort Drive.
3. The provision of the first phase of works, to improve play, leisure, and sports facilities on site is scheduled to be completed by the close of March 2025.
4. The allocation from the UKSPF to the Fareham North-West Vision of £700,000 (£500,000 capital and £200,000 revenue) would be combined with £1.75 million of Section 106 developers' contributions (for outdoor recreation and maintenance) that had been reallocated from the Cams Alders Vision after it had been concluded that the Cams Alders Vision was no longer a viable project.
5. Despite the significant financial support allocated to commence the levelling up of the facilities in the Fareham Park area, it is clear that the level of success of the project will be influenced by the ability to attract external grant funding.
6. The cost to deliver the leisure and community improvements is estimated to be £4.6m and while funds totalling £2.45m have been secured (£1.75m Section 106 developers' contributions and £700,000 UKSPF), this leaves a shortfall of approx. £2.15m.

A PHASED APPROACH

7. The project has been divided into phases, with phase 1 needing to be delivered by March 2025 because of the time constraints imposed by the UK Shared Prosperity Funding. The delivering of phase 2 would then be subject to securing additional funding.

Phase 1:

- Engagement with the community regarding the needs of the facilities
- Development of a community-led masterplan
- Relocation and enhancement of the existing play and recreational facilities i.e., MUGA and children's play area
- Pitch and drainage improvements
- Ecological and topographic site surveys

Phase 2:

- A new community centre (larger, fit-for-purpose, more energy efficient)
- Toilet or changing facilities, as required, to service the football pitches
- Replacement pétanque court
- Car parking to serve the leisure and community facilities
- Site landscaping

Phase 3: (subject to the existing community facilities having been relocated)

- Provide affordable housing.

8. The community-led masterplan for the area, including the mix of leisure and community facilities, would be identified following consultation with the local community, key Members, interested parties and partner organisations.

CONCLUSION OF PHASE 1

Play and Recreation Facilities

9. Under Phase 1 of the Fareham Park Vision, a tender for the new play and recreation facilities has been awarded.
10. The successful design, from Eibe Play, incorporates imaginative play equipment, true accessibility for children with a range of disabilities and special needs and an inspiring social area that provides appropriate and engaging space for girls, alongside more traditional sport and adventure play.
11. The final design took care to reflect the feedback from a popular public consultation exercise. The design features a running track, challenging cardio-vascular equipment and table tennis facilities, to meet a range of interests and exercise needs.
12. The new play and recreation facilities are scheduled to be installed on site by the close of March 2025. Following this, the existing play facilities will be returned to grass.

Site Surveys

13. Phase 1 of the Fareham Park Vision has also seen the completion of ecological and topographic surveys of the site, alongside an assessment of the pitch quality and existing drainage.
14. The pitch assessment has provided the necessary information to determine the required improvements to provide the best playing surface for the Clubs that hire the pitches.
15. The pitch improvements works are also scheduled to be completed prior to the close of March 2025.

Consultation and Engagement

16. Phase 1 of the Fareham Park Vision has also focussed on engagement with the community on the requirements for the new leisure, recreational and community facilities, the subsequent development of a design concept and the completion of a Masterplan for the site.
17. To date, the engagement has been successfully carried out. Just under 3,000 local residents and community organisations have had their say, whether at the workshops held, through voting on decisions about the site or by attending the Special CAT exhibition and meeting in March at which the concept was presented to members of the community. Public responses have been largely very supportive of the approach, with a few individuals providing helpful input on aspects of the design that will require consideration.
18. A Phase 1 report, entitled the Fareham Park Community Vision marked Appendix A, detailing the design concept, has been drafted by the architect consultants (Liftschutz Davidson Sandilands). They continue to develop the potential layout for the space within the new community centre using the feedback from the consultation alongside the brief set by Council Officers.
19. The Masterplan for the Fareham Park site has been progressed. As a result of the need to provide floodlighting for the petanque terrain, to replicate the existing provision, two site plan options were developed. These are detailed in Appendix B
20. Early consultation with the Council's Planning Department regarding the two possible site options advised that the community was consulted as to which would be their favoured layout.
21. This consultation has been conducted on the Let's Talk Fareham Park social media platform and on the Council's Fareham Park webpages, in addition to local household letter drops and a voting box in the community centre.
22. The Public's favoured layout is Option B, with 53% of respondents favouring this version of the Masterplan.

HENRY CORT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

23. One area of uncertainty and potential benefit to the Fareham Park Vision is the consultation that has been carried out by Hampshire County Council as to the future of the Henry Cort Community College following the decision to build a new secondary

school at North Whiteley. The consultation considered 3 possible approaches to the school site;

Option 1: That the school site remains operational

Option 2: The school closes

Option 3: The school is relocated to North Whiteley Secondary School site.

24. Although the consultation regarding the options ended in May of this year, Hampshire County Council advises that no decision will be finalised until early next year.
25. Hampshire County Council currently leases 2 sizeable car parks, totalling 101 parking spaces, to the south of Henry Cort Drive from Fareham Borough Council for use by staff and visitors to Henry Cort Community College.
26. Should options 2 or 3 be adopted by the County Council, by the end of the summer term 2027 these car parks would no longer be required by the school and the Leases would be surrendered.
27. In this case, the 2 'school' car parks would provide ample parking for visitors to the sports pitches, new play and recreational facilities and the new community centre.
28. Should option 1 be the favoured approach by the County Council, i.e. that the school site remains operational, additional parking would become a greater priority as part of the wider site plans.

PLANNING APPROACH

29. As the UK Shared Prosperity Funding allocation towards the Fareham Park proposal needs to be spent by the close of March 2025, it has been advised that we submit the application to Planning as an Outline Application. As a result, the cost of specialist consultants is kept to a minimum at this stage.
30. This approach will provide the Public and potential funders with the clear message that the Council is committed to delivering the Vision, while ensuring that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation is prioritised on aspects that have an immediate benefit to the community.

FINANCIAL PICTURE

31. The full cost of the total leisure, community and sports improvements at Fareham Park is estimated to be £4.6m. The prudential use of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding allocation, combined with the £1.75m in Section 106 developers' contributions that were reassigned from the Cams Alders Vision, means that over half of the funds required have been identified.
32. To ensure the best possible opportunity to attract further funding to achieve this corporate priority, Officers have secured the services of a specialist bid writing organisation - Money Tree. Their role will be to identify potential funding streams, advise on an appropriate funding partnership with the existing Community Association, collate information ready for applications and draft major applications on the Council's behalf.

33. As these services have been funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation, the Council's £1.75m in Section 106 developers' contributions from the Cams Alders Vision will be able to be used in its entirety as matched funding towards any applications.
34. It is anticipated that this significant starting budget, combined with the excellent Community Vision document and Outline Planning consent (subject to it being granted) will put any application in a strong position. However, it is important to note that funding is hugely competitive currently and there are no guarantees of applications being supported.
35. Any shortfall in funding could be met from future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts. This could be up to £2.15m, depending on the success of any external funding bids. A request for the additional funding will be made at a later date once the success of potential funding bids are known.

NEXT STEPS

36. With the support of the Executive, the crucial next step in the Fareham Park Vision will be the submission of an outline planning application for the proposed improvements.
37. This is scheduled for November of this year. Approval of the planning application will enable Money Tree to commence with drafting major funding applications for submission by the Council and Fareham North-West Community Association. This partnership approach maximises access to a variety of funding streams, increasing the Council's potential of delivering the most beneficial improvements.
38. Alongside the work by the bid writers, Council Officers will be developing the strong links made with the community through the various consultation and engagement exercises.
39. To date, 4 local residents have expressed an interest in supporting the Council in the vital role of 'sounding boards' for the community. These volunteers will provide feedback as plans for the new community facilities develop, act as cheerleaders for the Vision within the community and evidence the Council's focus on community needs which will be crucial for success with funding applications.
40. The new volunteers and existing Community Association Trustees will be offered training to provide them with the skills and confidence to effectively carry out these roles and help to develop a stronger Association that meets the needs of the community and the new facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS/CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

41. In line with the Council's priority of protecting the environment, each aspect of the plans and proposals for the Fareham Park Vision has considered sustainability and ecological impact.
42. A key aspect of the play facilities tender was the requirement to re-use any good quality recreational equipment from the existing play area where possible, with provision for some pieces of equipment that would not complement the new play facility to be stored for re-use on other sites. In addition, once the new play facilities are installed, the current play area will be returned to grass until the site to the north of Henry Cort Drive is developed.
43. In preparation for the submission of the Outline Planning Application, the services of an

ecological consultant have been secured to ensure that vulnerable species are not impacted by the proposals and the final plan will have a benefit (or 'Net Gain') for biodiversity. To support this, the plans feature a biodiverse community garden which will be a significant improvement on the current grassed site which has limited ecological diversity.

44. Finally, the more detailed plans that are being developed for the new community centre prioritise the environmental sustainability of the design, which will reduce the financial demands on the new Community Association in addition to reducing the impact on the environment.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Claire Benfield or Emma Bowler, Leisure and Community Team.