

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks

25 February 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks - Councillor A Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Place

Ward(s) affected:

Whoberley

Title:

A Vision for Allesley Park Walled Garden - Update

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

Allesley Hall Park is one of the Area Parks within the City, with a rich history and the Council is supported in its management and ongoing maintenance by very enthusiastic local people who are members of the Allesley Park Residents Association, Allesley Park Walled Garden Group and the Friends of Allesley Park.

In September 2014, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks approved the adoption of a document entitled A Vision for Allesley Park Walled Garden as a framework for the future development of the Walled Garden and furthermore also approved that a grant could be sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund to implement the Vision.

This document provides an update on progress and changes to the original proposal following discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The park is under the control of the Parks Service within the Place Directorate.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports & Parks is recommended to approve the submission of an external funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Heritage Grants' scheme for c£480,000 to implement the Vision for the Walled Garden rather than an original proposal for submitting a bid to the HLF 'Parks for People' funding scheme.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – A Vision for Allesley Park Walled Garden

Appendix 2 – Allesley Park Walled Garden Cost Estimate

Other useful background papers:

Report to Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks 09/09/14

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Title: A Vision for Allesley Park Walled Garden - Update

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 For several decades, residents and groups that use Allesley Park have taken a keen interest in the management of the park. This has led to the formation of two groups of volunteers who help in the maintenance and management of the park, namely the Friends of Allesley Park and the Allesley Park Walled Garden Group. Both groups have an interest in the Walled Garden and this has led to disputes in the past.
- 1.2 The City Council was keen to see a closer working relationship between the two groups and facilitated meetings of a Working Group comprising members of the two groups and the local Residents Association. The aim of the group was to agree a development plan for the Walled Garden.
- 1.3 The development plan was adopted by all the members of the Working Group in April 2014 under the title 'A Vision for Allesley Park Walled Garden' and accepted as a development plan for the Walled Garden by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks in September 2014.
- 1.4 In September 2014, Cabinet Member approval was granted for a bid to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Parks for People funding scheme for c£480,000 with provisional approval of 10% match funding of £48,000 from the City Council to support the bid.
- 1.5 A bid was made to the HLF Parks for People scheme in February 2015, however this was subsequently withdrawn when it became apparent that a much larger bid had also been made to the same scheme by the City Council for the restoration of the London Road cemetery.
- 1.6 Discussions with the HLF suggest that the Parks for People funding scheme is aimed at public open space improvements on a much larger scale than those proposed for the Walled Garden. The HLF have recommended a different grant scheme which could be more suitable for this proposal: their 'Heritage Grant' funds projects costing over £100,000 and is less restrictive regarding what it will fund and the conditions under which the grant is awarded. Competition for funding is however more intense as a result.
- 1.7 The Heritage Grant scheme requires the same 10% match funding (5% of development costs and 5% delivery costs) as the Parks for People scheme however the Heritage Grant scheme allows volunteer time etc. to be used 'in kind' and has four application windows a year, each 3 months apart, allowing a bid or series of bids to be made as necessary. This could enable other related projects to be made as they come online.

The next three bid 'windows' are:

- 26 February 2016 for a decision in June 2016
- 24 May 2016 for a decision in September 2016
- 23 August 2016 for a decision in November 2016

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Option 1: To leave the garden as it is and to choose not to seek external funding. The retention of the status quo risks the groups involved in the garden becoming demoralised and potentially disengaged with the park. Their contribution to the management and general upkeep of the park cannot be understated and their assistance in securing the Green Flag award for five years is vital. This option is not recommended.

Option 2: Seek external funding from the HLF 'Parks for People' scheme
The HLF recommend that a bid to their Parks for People scheme should be of significance, potentially of a million pounds or more. A bid of this size for Allesley Park would have to include the wider park and as such require much more comprehensive consultation than has been carried out for the Walled Garden proposal whilst the outcomes for such a project would be much more onerous. It would also require a much larger match funding commitment from the City Council. The challenges in delivering the elements with available resources render this proposal impractical. This option is not recommended

Option 3: Seek external funding from the HLF 'Heritage Grants' scheme
The Vision for the Walled Garden has been agreed by all parties as a workable management framework. By adopting the Vision, the groups have committed to work together in partnership with the City Council to deliver the actions outlined in the Vision including seeking external funding to deliver the new design proposal.

It is recommended that this option is approved so that external funding can be sought to make the Vision a reality and to strengthen relations with these important volunteer groups.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

Almost four years of consultation and discussion have been undertaken during the development of the Vision document. This consultation was led by the City Council and involved the Allesley Park Residents Association, the Friends of Allesley Park and the Allesley Park Walled Garden Group. The groups carried out consultation with the wider public through questionnaires, distributed within 0.5 miles of the park and via events where members of the public have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

The Vision document, as attached in Appendix 1, has been overwhelmingly agreed by all parties as a framework for the future development of the Walled Garden.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 If approved, it is proposed to submit an external funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund when the next application "window" opens in February 2016.
- 4.2 Other elements within the Vision Document will be delivered as resources, both financial and personnel permit.

4.3 Heritage Lottery Fund/Project Timetable (indicative)

Date	Milestone
February 2016	First-round application to HLF
June 2016	Announcement from HLF on first-round application
July/Aug 2016 (Assuming success at first-round application)	To draft a further report to Cabinet Member outlining the project and finance support needed and to seek approval to enter into a contract with the Heritage Lottery Fund to accept their funding offer
September 2016 – August 2018 (if approved by Cabinet Member)	Development phase preparation
August 2018	Second-round application to HLF
December 2018	Announcement from HLF on second-round application
Early 2019 (Assuming success at Stage 2)	Tendering process: consultants, sub-consultants and contractors
Mid 2019	Work starts on site
Autumn 2020	Works completed and official opening of redesigned Walled Garden

5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

5.1 Financial implications

The Vision Document proposes the redesign of the Walled Garden. The design includes a costed proposal (as attached in Appendix 2) for the works concerned which, it is proposed will be the subject of an external funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund of c£480,000.

If successful, the Council's "match" contribution will be 5% of development costs and a further 5% of the delivery costs totalling c£48,000, which will be the subject of a further report if the first-round application is successful.

It should be noted that at this stage there is no commitment being entered into by either the Council or the Heritage Lottery Fund. If successful, at the first-round stage a further report to fully cover all financial and administrative issues will be tabled at a future Cabinet Member meeting for consideration, as per the indicative project timetable at para 4.3 above.

It should also be considered however that if the proposal be later withdrawn this may jeopardise future Lottery bids made by the City Council.

At this time it is intended that the match funding indicated above could be funded from a combination of parks revenue and possibly s106 contributions and probably spent across two financial years.

5.2 Legal implications

If the bid is successful, it is anticipated that the Council will be required to enter into a grant funding agreement with Heritage Lottery. Additional agreements between the Council and may prove necessary to enter into further agreements with the Friends of Allesley Park and

the Allesley Park Walled Garden Group depending on any conditions arising from the Heritage Lottery Funding.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

This work demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to support residents to help improve their local environment.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Via the normal Council practices and procedures for such projects

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The Vision Document provides an agreed and supported focus for the development of an important historical element within a local park. Its implementation will have a positive impact for both the council and local people.

6.4 Equalities / EIA Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The improvements proposed have been supported by the Residents Association, Friends Group, Walled Garden Group and other local people following three years of meetings and discussions. The representatives of the groups are a mix of different genders and issues concerning people with disabilities have been considered at each stage of the Vision's development.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The ecological content of the Walled Garden will be improved by planting of more diverse species including plants of historical and ecological interest, native wildflowers and unusual local variants of more common species (such as varieties of rare Warwickshire / Coventry apple trees, traditional English herbs and food-plants including those used in the 1700s etc.). This will help boost the biodiversity of the park and the city as a whole. The new garden will be used to educate visitors, both formally through school visits and through classes in horticulture for adults, stimulating further interest in the environment. The proposal includes interpretation both in the garden and in the wider park; this will reference the park's rich heritage, which dates back to Norman times. All these elements will help stimulate interest in the Garden and the park, encouraging more visitors who will be able to learn more about the park and the local environment as a whole.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Vision document is the result of working closely with the Residents Association, Friends Group and Walled Garden Group. Its successful implementation will bring about strongly positive links with these volunteer groups and help stimulate greater interest with all park users.

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Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Officer	Resources	8/2/16	8/2/16
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Finance: Cath Crosby	Finance Manager	Resources	8 th Feb 2016	10 th Feb 2016
Legal: Helen Lynch	Legal Manager	Resources	8 th Feb 2016	10 th Feb 2016
Director: Martin Yardley	Director – Place Directorate	Place	12 th Feb 2016	12 th Feb 2016
Councillor Abdul Khan	Cabinet Member (Energy & Environment)		8 th Feb 2016	8 th Feb 2016

This report is published on the Council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings

Appendices

1: Allesley Park Walled Garden – A Vision for the Future

2: Allesley Park Walled Garden Cost Estimate