

18th September 2017

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport – Councillor K Caan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Ward(s) affected:

Sherborne

Title:

Petition – Grading of Naul’s Mill Park

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to a petition containing 9 signatures which was submitted to Coventry City Council. The petition is supported by Councillor Kelly and requests that the Council upgrade the classification of the park and undertake work with other organisations and the community to develop the park in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

The Petition reads:-

“We the undersigned wish to register with the Council our concern about the grading of Naul’s Mill Park. It has been classified as merely a local park and as such qualifies for far less funding than for more prestigious parks.

It is one of the oldest formal parks in the City, beautifully landscaped with many historic trees and has one of the few stretches of open water in the City. Being very close to the City Centre it could be a very important asset to the whole city. It is also a valuable green space in a deprived inner city community.

We request:

- a) That the Local Authority take steps to upgrade Naul’s Mill Park.
- b) Undertake to work with other organisations and the community to obtain funding to develop the park in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner for the benefit of the area and the city as a whole.”

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport is asked to approve that:

1. Officers continue their efforts to explore all options to exploit external funding opportunities and work with the Friends of Naul's Mill Park and other voluntary groups and organisations to develop the site and improve maintenance standards.
2. Officers continue to support the Friends of Naul's Mill Park in the identification and application of external funding opportunities to improve the park.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

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

Report title: Petition – Grading of Naul’s Mill Park

Context (or background)

- 1.1 A petition was received to request that the Council upgrade the classification of the park and undertake work with other organisations and the community to develop the park in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.
- 1.2 Nauls Mill Park is an attractive area of open space in Sherbourne, less than half a mile to the North of Coventry City centre.
- 1.3 The park takes its name from “Nauls Mill”, a mill which lay on Radford Brook during the 12th Century. In 1889 the Corporation acquired the land and in the late 1900’s the area was landscaped and opened as a public park in 1909.
- 1.4 Naul’s Mill Park is classed as a Neighbourhood Park within Coventry City Council’s Green Space Strategy. This designation is generally assigned based on the importance or significance of the City’s green spaces based on quality assessments and the distance people travel to attend the site. This has little or no real bearing on the sites propensity to attract external funding.
- 1.5 The site contains a range of features including amenity grass land containing a good canopy of trees of various ages, shrub beds, flower beds, a children’s play area and other traditional features.
- 1.6 A distinctive feature contained in the park is a large Edwardian model boating lake at the parks southern end. Due to persistent leaks and issues with blanket weed the lake was drained several years ago and kept dry although in recent months the lake has been refilled to assess its condition.
- 1.7 The park is primarily used by local residents and is popular with all ages. Its main uses include dog walking, informal recreation, children’s play and picnics, especially during the summer. Occasional events have been held in the park in the recent past including bands in the park and holiday activities run by the Coventry City Council park ranger service. The park may also benefit from being included in the current Public Health walk project which is currently out to tender.
- 1.8 A community group the Friends of Naul’s Mill Park was established in 2015. The friends care for their local park and have an interest in its maintenance and management. They have already become involved in the practical maintenance of the park undertaking such tasks as litter clearing, and improving shrub and flower beds. The group are supported by officers within the Greenspace Service.
- 1.9 The park itself falls within the portfolio of the Greenspace Service which is responsible for the overall management and development of the park. Grounds maintenance operations however are undertaken by the Streetpride Service. A range of maintenance operations are undertaken within the park to defined frequencies and standards. Tasks include grass cutting, hedge cutting, shrub pruning and weeding, cleansing and litter bin emptying, play area inspections and repair.
- 1.10 The funding allocated to the Greenspace Service was reduced last year by 25% representing £1m. The Greenspace Service staffing numbers were reduced across all levels and equipment numbers reduced accordingly. Hours of operation were reviewed along with reductions in grounds and infrastructural maintenance standards, and reductions

in some services and facilities. For instance grass cutting frequencies were reduced from 16 to 8 cuts per year.

- 1.11 This funding reduction clearly restricts our ability to increase maintenance frequencies and standards however every attempt is made to provide the highest standards possible with the resources available. Overall however the levels of maintenance and cleanliness achieved at the park appear to be adequate with very few complaints being received.
- 1.12 In the past few years the Council has invested funding in Naul's Mill Park providing funding to carry out a range of improvements which are outside the routine maintenance programme. This has included footpath repairs between Coundon Street and Bridgman Road, the creation of a new rose bed in the ornamental area, the installation of a new noticeboard, restoration of ornamental beds and associated bulb planting, various tree works with the replacement of fencing and gate posts and replacement play equipment.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Increasing grounds maintenance and cleansing frequencies within existing resources is not considered to be an option for the reasons set out above and it is therefore recommended that the existing standards of grounds maintenance and cleansing continue to be applied.
- 2.2 The option to do nothing has also been rejected as it is important that constant efforts are made to improve standards of maintenance and develop the park to increase use and to meet user needs by exploring external funding opportunities and volunteer input.
- 2.3 As most external funding sources can only be accessed by voluntary groups (for example SITA, WREN, Heart of England, Awards For All, Tesco Bag Grants etc) It is recommended that Greenspace Officers will continue to support and facilitate the Friends Group assisting them in the making of applications to appropriate external funding agencies to help improve the park.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 There has been no consultation on this matter

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 To be agreed subject to approval of a recommendation within this report

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

- 5.1 Financial implications

The costs of maintaining the park to existing standards will be managed within existing resources.

- 5.2 Legal implications

None at present

Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?

Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry. Nauls Mill Park is well used by local residents for informal recreation, sports as well as a venue for events and activities and in doing so helps improve the quality of life of Coventry citizens and also helps address health inequalities.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through the existing Place directorate risk profile.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Continued maintenance of the site and support to voluntary groups will be delivered using existing resources.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

No equality impact assessments have been undertaken.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

No direct impact

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Greenspace Service will continue to foster close partnership engagement particularly with the Friends of Naul's Mill Park.

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Place

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