

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Services – Councillor J Innes

29th January 2018

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Ward(s) affected:

Cheylesmore

Title:

Petition – To Request that Coventry Council Landscape the Land at Whitley Common / JLR Bridge over A444

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to a petition containing 111 signatures which was submitted to Coventry City Council. The petition is supported by Councillor Cllr Bailey and requests that the Council landscape the land at Whitley Common / JLR Bridge over A444.

The petition reads:-

When Costain vacated their compound on Whitley Common they were contracted to return the land to its original state. They did not do so and the work was to be undertaken by Coventry Council who have reserved funding for this landscaping. The bridge has been open for 16 months now but the land remains a complete eyesore, uneven with overgrown weeds which attracts litter. The tall weeds are also a danger as they restrict the view of motorists. I have been trying to get this work done for some time by polite request but without result. I have now asked my local Councillor to intervene and I am considering an approach to my MP.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for (City Services) is asked to note:

- 1 The work which has recently been undertaken to control vegetation growth on the A444 slip road verges.
- 2 The landscape work proposed to be undertaken on the A444 slip road verges and time scales for undertaking these works.
- 3 The proposed landscape renovation works to be undertaken on Whitley Common and time scales for undertaking these works.

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 – To get Coventry Council to Landscape the Land at Whitley Common / JLR Bridge over A444

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The petition refers generally to two areas of land. The first being an area of land on Whitley Common which had been used by Costain's under agreement as a temporary depot and the other area of land includes a number of slip road verge embankments on the A444 constructed as part of the JLR bridge construction.
- 1.2 Planning approval for the scheme at Whitley Junction was approved in February 2014 which included a condition that the landscaping was carried out in accordance with an approved plan on the on the slip road verge areas adjacent to the A444.
- 1.3 An early review of the works and programme of the main contractor, Costain's, identified a number of concerns the Council had with aspects of the works so a decision was taken to remove the landscaping works from the contract. The main works proceeded to completion and the site was then handed back to the City Council in July 2015.
- 1.4 On completion of the works the Council committed to ensure that the landscaping scheme was undertaken and the remedial works to the site compound area were executed. Over a number of months the Council pursued Costain's to undertake the works and despite a number of reassurances the works never transpired. Both parties later entered into a contractual dispute over a large number of items which took over 6 months to resolve.
- 1.5 In March 2017, following legal advice a Settlement Agreement was entered into outside of the contract. This removed the requirement for Costain's to complete the A444 landscape works and the remedial works required on Whitley Common. It was determined that this work would be undertaken directly by the Council.
- 1.6 At the time of the Settlement Agreement, the planting season had effectively passed. The planting season runs from October to March. To ensure that planting of trees and shrubs along the A444 had the best opportunity of surviving and becoming successfully established it was agreed that the planting would be undertaken during the forthcoming planting season.
- 1.7 The landscaping scheme includes the planting of over 2,600 trees made up of both standard trees and whips from a wide variety and balance of native species. It also includes the planting of over 1,500 ground cover shrubs from a variety of species. Both offer a range of colour and characteristics, providing a resource and habitat for wildlife and reducing future maintenance demands and cost.
- 1.8 Whilst the Settlement Agreement with Costain's was being established no grounds maintenance of the A444 verge areas was undertaken prior to landscaping as this had been part of the main contractors work programme. However, this responsibility was subsequently handed to the Council and some tractor flailing was carried out to maintain site lines.
- 1.9 A dense covering of vegetation had become established over the newly created verges giving an unsightly appearance. The steepness of the verges has meant that the vegetation could not be reduced by conventional pedestrian operated mowers and has necessitated the hiring of a robotic flail to cut and prepare the steep banks for planting. This work was undertaken during December 2017. The remaining verge areas will be cut by use of a tractor mounted flail. Both operations will be undertaken simultaneously to minimise the need for traffic management arrangement and inconvenience to motorists.

1.10 It is proposed that the area of land on Whitley Common previously occupied by Costain's as a temporary Depot will be cultivated and planted with wild flowers. The work to cultivate and prepare the ground started in December 2017 with seeding taking place during April to early May 2018. Similar to other wild flower seeding undertaken throughout the City a range of differing plant species will be sown, providing a dramatic and vibrant display of colour and interest lasting from May to October. This will also provide a valuable food resource supporting many bird species and invertebrates including bees.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 The option to do nothing has been rejected as the areas will continue to naturalise and become increasingly unsightly and the subject of complaint.

2.2 It is important that the A444 verge areas and the land on Whitley Common are properly landscaped and sustainably managed to provide a suitably attractive and welcoming environment which contributes to the environmental quality of the area but also to provide a contribution to supporting wildlife.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 There has been no consultation on this matter

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 Operations to remove the existing vegetation on the A444 verges and prepare the ground for landscaping was undertaken during December 2017. The planting of trees and shrubs as detailed above will be undertaken between January and March 2018,

4.2 Works to restore the land on Whitley Common previously used by Costain's as a temporary depot will began during Dec 2017 with ground preparations. This will be followed by wild flower seeding during early May 2018.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

5.1. Financial implications

Funding to undertake the landscape and seeding operations will be from existing revenue 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 and contribute greatly to improving the quality of life to those that live and work in the City 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 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 with local residents and voluntary groups.

Report author(s):

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Place

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Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Cath Crosby	Lead Accountant, Finance	Place	11 th Dec 2017	14 th Dec 2017
Clara Thomson	Planning and Highways Lawyer, Legal Services	Place	11 th Dec 2017	13 th Dec 2017
Names of approvers for submission: (Officers and Members)				
Liz Knight	Governance Services Officer	Place	18 th Jan 2018	15 th Jan 2018
Ian Lewis	Senior Project Manager (Transportation & Delivery)	Place	6 th Dec 2017	6 th Dec 2017
Sam Morris	Streetpride Area Manager	Place	6 th Dec 2017	6 th Dec 2017
Andrew Walster	Assistant Director (Streetscene and Regulatory Services)	Place	10 th Jan 2018	11 th Jan 2018
Councillor J Innes	Cabinet Member for City Services	-	15 th Jan 2018	15 th Jan 2018

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