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Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport held at 2.00 pm on Monday, 18 September 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor K Caan (Cabinet Member)
Councillor M Lapsa (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Other Members Councillor L Kelly

Employees (by Directorate):

Place G Hood, L Knight

Apologies: Councillor R Ali

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

7. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

8. Petition - Condition of Naul's Mill Park Pond / Boating Lake

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place), which responded to a petition regarding the condition of the pond / boating lake at Naul's Mill Park.

A petition bearing 222 signatures had been submitted by Councillor Kelly, a Sherbourne Ward Councillor, who attended the meeting along with Ms O'Hagan, the petition organiser. The petitioners were concerned about the condition of the pond in Naul's Mill Park, which had been left empty for 4 summers, and requested that the Council take immediate steps to enable the pond to be filled on a temporary basis and undertake to work with other organisations and the community to obtain funding to redevelop the pond in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

The report indicated that in 1898 the Corporation had acquired the land and in the late 1900's the area was landscaped and opened as a public park in 1909. The park currently contained a range of features including amenity grassland, a good canopy of trees of various ages, shrub beds, flower beds and a children's play area. In addition a distinctive feature was the large Edwardian model boating lake

at the parks' southern end. The lake was roughly 3,000 square metres in area, measuring 100m long and 40m wide, varying in depth from 0.6m to 1.2m. The lake was fed by a stream which normally ran through the park in a culvert, but could be diverted to fill the pond.

Although originally left full throughout the year, over the past 10 years, the lake had been filled in March and drained at the end of November. This was to prevent people ice-skating or otherwise putting themselves at risk should the water freeze over during the winter.

The Cabinet Member noted that the lake was lined with concrete slabs with the joints between them sealed with a flexible bitumen jointing compound. The bitumen had perished over time and caused the pool to leak. In addition, the slabs have become unstable and cracked. By 2012, the lake had begun to lose water to such an extent that the stream needed to be permanently diverted to keep the lake full. In 2012/13 the lake was drained and not refilled due to concerns with the effects that the leaking water may be having downstream / below ground. However, during 2017, the lake was refilled to assess the extent of the leaks.

The Cabinet Member was advised that there was also an issue with blanketweed when the lake was filled, which used to be controlled with chemicals. However, with the constant throughput of water and the leak previously mentioned, any algacides would be diluted and become ineffective and there were also concerns in relation to the environment to be considered.

The report set out 8 various options which varied from restoring the lake to its original condition to doing nothing. It was reported that there were no existing funds for any of the options identified although Section 106 funds associated with a housing development on a neighbouring site may become available at some point. Funding could however be obtained from grants such as WREN, BIFFA or Veolia. In addition, organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund or Esmee Fairburn Trust may offer grants to fund its repair / restoration.

It was acknowledged that future options for the pool should be explored and it was recommended that consultation be undertaken with the Friends of Naul's Mill Park, Ward councillors, users of the park and local residents to identify a preferred option and to enable project costs to be calculated.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport:-

- 1. Approve that consultation is held with the Friends of Naul's Mill Park, Ward councillors, users of Naul's Mill Park and local residents to identify what is the preferred future of the pool.**
- 2. Approve that following the consultation exercise, a project be worked up that reflects the results and includes the cost for the preferred option, with this then being the subject of a further Cabinet Member report.**
- 3. Note that the lake is currently being filled.**

9. **Petition - Grading of Naul's Mill Park**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place), which responded to a petition regarding the grading of Naul's Mill Park.

A petition bearing 9 signatures had been submitted by Councillor Kelly, a Sherbourne Ward Councillor, who attended the meeting along with Ms Hensman, the petition organiser. The petitioners were concerned about the classification of Naul's Mill Park as a local park and requested that the Council take steps to upgrade the park and 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.

The report indicated that Naul's Mill Park was classified as a 'Neighbourhood' Park within the Council's Green Space Strategy. This designation was generally assigned based on the importance or significance of the green space based on quality assessment and the distance people travel to attend the site. The report further indicated that this assessment had little or no real bearing on the sites propensity to attract external funding.

It was recognised that the park contained a range of features including amenity grassland, a god canopy of trees of various ages, shrub beds, flower beds and a children's play area. In addition, a distinctive feature contained in the park was 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. However, in recent months, the lake had been refilled to assess its condition.

The report indicated that currently the park was primarily used by local residents and was popular with all ages. Its main uses included dog walking, informal recreation, children's play and picnics, particularly through the summer. Occasional events had also been held in the park in the recent past, including bands in the park and holiday activities run by the Council's park ranger service. It was noted that the park may also benefit from being included in the current Public Health walk project which was out to tender.

The Cabinet Member was advised that a community group 'the Friends of Naul's Mill Park' was established in 2015. The group cared for the park and took an active interest in its maintenance and management and undertook tasks such as litter clearing and improving shrub and flower beds. Overall management of the park remained with the Council's Greenspace Service. It was noted that the funding for the Service was reduced last year by 25%, amounting to £1m. As a consequence, 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, for example, grass cutting frequency was reduced from 16 to 8 times a year. It was acknowledged that this reduction clearly restricts the Council's ability to increase maintenance frequencies.

However, in the past few years, the Council had invested funding into Naul's Mill Park to enable a range of improvements to be undertaken outside of the routine maintenance programmes. This has included footpath repairs, the creation of a new rose bed in the ornamental area, the installation of a noticeboard, restoration of ornamental beds and associated bulb planting, various tree works, replacement of fencing and gates and replacement play equipment.

It was proposed that, as most external funding could only be accessed by voluntary groups, the Greenspace Officers continue to support and facilitate the Friends Group, assisting them in making applications to appropriate external funding agencies to help improve the park.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport approves 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.**
10. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.55 pm)