

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	23rd MARCH 2021
Heading:	COMMUNITY FACILITIES INVESTMENT		
Portfolio Holder:	COUNCILLOR DAVID MARTIN, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STREETS, PARKS AND TOWN CENTRES		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

This report recognises the investment already made in Ashfield's Parks and Green spaces and proposes a further, in-principle capital investment. It also proposes a procurement process for operating the café in Selston Country Park.

Recommendations:

- 1. To commence the procurement for the potential reopening of the Café at Selston Country Park.**
- 2. To amend the Council's Capital Programme for 2021/22 to include an additional provisional sum of £30,000.**
- 3. Subject to financial viability, to delegate approval to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to make a final stop-go decision once tenders have been returned.**
- 4. Subject to recommendation 3, to delegate approval to the Director of Place and Communities to award contracts for both capital work contracts and service contracts.**

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

During the Council meeting on 4th February 2021 a motion was proposed by Councillor David Martin and Seconded by Councillor Andy Gascoyne. This motion was carried and resolved that:

- a) approval be given for officers of the Council to work up costed plans, without delay, to create a new Café hub at Selston Country Park as a multipurpose extension to the current building, allowing it to be run full time for local people to use, in the same way other park cafes in the District are (to be Phase Two of the Country Park Plans);
- b) officers to note and record the medium term plans to work up Phase Three for the park, to provide more things of interest to do at the site with future Section 106 contributions from the Parish being allocated to this plan. The plan could include but is not limited to, formalising path and cycle routes, creating nature trails, extending the car park and installing a variety of play equipment;
- c) approval be given for officers to commence work on the long term lease options of the site with Nottinghamshire County Council and confirm intentions to extend the current lease with any future plans being presented to Cabinet for further approval;
- d) as a result of a) to c) above, officers be requested to develop a business case for consideration by Cabinet and to present to Council for approval, subject to the business case being financially viable and developed within the first quarter of 2021/22.

This report seeks approval for the existing building at Selston Country Park to reopen, subject to financial viability, as a Café, for use by local people and visitors. The precise capital and revenue implications will be determined following the procurement process.

Alternative Options Considered

The former café at Selston Country park is leased to the District Council. Options considered included:

Do Nothing

This is the default position, but by doing nothing the Council incurs costs. The estimated cost of 'doing nothing' over the duration of the existing lease is estimated to be £85,000. **Not Recommended**

Furthermore, in non-financial terms, doing nothing would be to miss the opportunity of enabling this Café to become a community asset for the residents of Selston and inhibit wider plans to see the greater utilisation of this park and the potential opportunities it presents.

Operate the Café as an in-house operation

This option was modelled as it would have the benefit of 'activating' Selston Country Park; however it is not the preferred option, given the significant associated costs of running such a facility directly. Furthermore, the Council is not experienced in running such operations and is why contracting with a proven and experienced operator is the preferred option. **Not Recommended**

Outsource the operation of the Café to an experienced contractor

This option is recommended to Cabinet. Not only does this allow the Council to introduce an experienced and previously successful operator which makes the success of this venture more likely, modelling suggests it is also the most viable, cost-effective option. This is consistent with the approach to the commissioning of park café facilities across the District.

Detailed Information

Investment in Parks and Green Space

Investment in Parks and Green Spaces is one of the Council's key corporate priorities. The investment into green spaces across the District has gathered pace with additional funding of £366k committed in the autumn last year, **to create a programme of over £1.5m of investment** this financial year. Investment into new play facilities has focused on Kirkby, following the investments in the Rurals and Hucknall in previous years. Sutton will be the focus in the fourth year of the programme.

Works underway include:

- Flood alleviation / habitat scheme in Hucknall at Titchfield Park
- In Kirkby at Hornbeam Park, Sorrel Drive, there will be installation of seating, bins, fencing and upgrading the paths, as well as installing new play equipment
- At Skegby Road Recreation Ground – to the play area and entrances
- At Titchfield Park in Kirkby to the play area
- Works to create a new car park at Kingsmill Reservoir
- Improvements to the play area at Riley Recreation Ground in Sutton

Development work and procurement to be undertaken includes:

- Titchfield Park Play & Youth Area, Hucknall – installation of new equipment following public consultation last summer
- Nuncargate Recreation Ground, Annesley Woodhouse – the upgrading of play and youth equipment and works to upgrade the footpaths
- For the Mill Waters project, a contractor will be appointed for the final phase of footpath works at Kings Mill Reservoir by the end of March
- Installation of youth equipment started on site in March at Healdswood Recreation Ground
- A group of former miners is being supported to reinstate the Silverhill Colliery winding wheels on the Silverhill Wood site
- A draft masterplan is being prepared for public consultation for Huthwaite Welfare Park

Selston Country Park

Councillors have been keen to see a similar approach towards investment and improvement taken at Selston Country Park and this is why recent improvements have been undertaken; such as the creation of three planters to create a community garden alongside a number of improvements, such as tree works, new picnic benches and the cleaning of the park's fence.

The former Selston Country Park Café, managed by the Council, was closed in 2017 and the Council is keen to see the facility put back into use. The building is leased from the County Council and the current lease expires on the 1st April 2029.

This proposal would see the existing building turned back into a Café, for use by local people and visitors and whilst the precise capital and revenue implications will be determined following the procurement process, it is envisaged that, subject to financial viability, a refurbished Café will re-open this summer.

A capital budget of £30,000 is proposed, which may be used on any community asset within the District, including possibly Selston Country Park. This would be funded using prudential borrowing.

With regard to the operating of a new Café at Selston Country Park, an options appraisal has been undertaken which recommends awarding a contract to a specialist contractor for the management and operation of this Café. A tender process is currently underway, and the precise structure of any contractual arrangement will be shaped by subsequent dialogue with potential providers.

A delegation is sought to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to award a contract to a successful operator and to authorise any capital works up to £30k that may be required.

Detailed financial modelling has been undertaken to inform this decision and is available as an exempt appendix to this report given the commercial sensitivities. Releasing this information may hinder the procurement process and inhibit the Council securing the best possible commercial arrangement.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Corporate Plan theme – Economic Growth and Place. Provision and improvement of the District's green spaces is a top corporate priority.

Legal:

There are no significant legal issues associated with the recommendations in the report. The Legal Team will provide ongoing advice and support as part of the tendering process, and any subsequent legal arrangements, as well as in respect of a potential future lease extension.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	It is anticipated that the annual cost of operating the Café will be no greater than the current annual cost whilst it remains closed. Any proposed variation from this will be brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.
General Fund – Capital Programme	Up to £30k funded via Prudential Borrowing.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Potential applicants do not come forward to operate the proposed Café business.	It is anticipated that there will be interest in operating the Café. However, if no suitable interest (eg due to the pandemic) is shown, the project will be temporarily shelved until such time as potential operators may be found.
The opening of the Café is not financially viable.	Assessment of the financial viability will take into account the £9k costs per annum, however, if after taking this into account the project is not financially viable it will be temporarily shelved.

Human Resources:

There are no Human Resources implications as a result of this report

Environmental/Sustainability

There are no Environmental/Sustainability implications as a result of this report

Equalities:

There are no Equality **implications** as a result of this report

Other Implications:

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

Not applicable

Report Author and Contact Officer

Christos Zannettou
Customer Support and Contract Manager
Tel: 01623 457379 (ext: 4379)
Email: c.zannettou@ashfield.gov.uk

Theresa Hodgkinson
Director of Place and Communities
Tel: 07917245875
Email: t.hodgkinson@ashfield.gov.uk