

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources
DATE	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2017
INTERIM DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
TITLE OF REPORT	Middlefield/Northfield Place-Making and Active Travel Project (& Environmental and Flood Prevention Works at Heathryfold Park, 2 <sup>nd</sup> report)
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/008
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Finance, Policy and Resources Committee instructed the Head of Land and Property Assets to seek grant funds so as to allow the environment within Heathryfold Park to be enhanced.

Three grants have been applied for:

- A Scottish Natural Heritage: Green Infrastructure Strategic Infrastructure Fund (ERDF) grant application (for £426,813) to improve the environment within Heathryfold Park;
- B Nestrans grant application (for £150,445.45) to improve the crossings across Provost Rust Drive and Manor Avenue for pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities; and
- C Sustrans grant application (for £469,093.83)
  - routes across Heathryfold Park that are suitable for cyclists and those with disabilities; and
  - a new connection between the cycle routes on Auchmill Road and Provost Rust Drive (by-passing the forthcoming Haudagain junction works)

Scottish Natural Heritage has written to the Council advising that it is their intention to award a grant, subject to the finalising of the detail of the proposals.

Nestrans' board have also provisionally approved a grant award to this project, subject to confirmation of the available budget on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on this progress; and to seek approval for these two provisional grant awards to be accepted, once the details have been finalised.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that the Committee gives approval for:

- 2.1 the use of existing budgets (flood alleviation budget and allocated staffing budget, see items 3.1 and 3.2) as match funding towards these two provisional grants awards (from SNH and Nestrans);
- 2.2 the signing of, or entry into, a legal agreement, or other documentation with these organisations, subject to approval of the terms by Head of Legal and Democratic Services; and
- 2.3 the addition of a Park Ranger post to the staff establishment for the duration of the SNH grant period (subject to the grant award being made to fund this additional post).

It is recommended that, if the application to Sustrans results in a provisional offer:

- 2.4 officers are instructed to report back to a future Committee on the next steps required to deliver the improved active travel routes across Heathryfold Park and the connections to Auchmill Road and Provost Rust Drive.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **3.1 Flood alleviation capital costs (Housing Revenue Account)**

On 9th June 2015 Aberdeen City Council's Finance, Policy and Resources Committee approved the development costs of a housing project within this Park. These development costs included an allowance of £500,000 towards undertaking the following capital works within this Park:

- de-culverting of the Scatter Burn, and
- construction of flood alleviation weirs (which, in turn, will create wetlands behind).

These civil engineering works will incur administration costs, professional fees and a statutory application fee. It is recommended that £75000 (15%) be allowed for such costs.

### **3.2 Project management costs**

While Scottish Natural Heritage is the Lead Partner for the **Green Infrastructure Strategic Infrastructure Fund**, the source of the funding is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This funding source will result in significant reporting requirements.

It is proposed that this reporting requirement will be met by seconding a member of staff to this project on a full-time basis (see item 2.1: allocated staffing budget). By doing so, this will allow additional grant monies to be obtained from ERDF.

### **3.3 Scottish Natural Heritage: Green Infrastructure Strategic Infrastructure Fund (ERDF) grant application/award**

Grant awards are made on the basis of 40% of the overall project costs.

A grant application of £426,813 has been made on the basis of a contribution from the Council of £640,219. It is proposed this is met from the Manor Walk flood alleviation budget (of £500,000), plus existing budgets for administration costs and staff (£140,219).

This potential grant award will include a contribution towards the capital cost of the works and will fund a new post of Park Ranger, for the duration of the grant period.

(It is intended that the Park Ranger will provide support for community based environmental activities within the Park and will also participate in curriculum based educational activities within the Park).

The Council has been informed that this application has been successful, subject to the finalisation of the details of the project. This expenditure is to be between June 2017 and December 2018.

### **3.4 Nestrans Grant application/award**

Grant awards are made without match funding requirements.

The Council has been informed that this application is provisionally successful, subject to confirmation of the budget for the coming year. This expenditure will be prior to April 2018.

### **3.5 Sustrans Grant application/award**

Grant awards are made on the basis of 50% of the overall project costs.

A grant application of £469,093.83 has been made on the basis of the match funding opportunity of the Manor Walk flood alleviation budget.

It is anticipated that the Council will be informed of the success, or otherwise, of this application in March 2017. If successful, this expenditure will be prior to April 2018.

(Sustrans have indicated a strong interest in this application:

- they have extended their financial commitment to the A96 cycle route improvements, so as to allow additional preparatory work to be undertaken on this proposal; and
- they have advised that they would welcome an additional grant application in 2018 **to further improve the active travel connections between Middlefield, Northfield and the rest of the City.** If the SNH grant application is successful, this will provide a further match-funding opportunity).

### **3.6 Revenue costs associated with the environmental improvements to Heathryfold Park (SNH application)**

The area of the proposed environmental improvements is divided into two main areas:

- an area owned by Heathryfold Allotment Holders Association; and
- an area owned by the Council and maintained by the Environmental Services team.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Finance Policy and Resources Committee approved the cost of maintaining the ground that is to be leased from the Allotment Association (which had been estimated by Environmental Services at £7,000 per annum).

It is proposed that the improvements to the area of the Park owned by the Council will be undertaken in manner that achieves a richer environment, but which can be maintained within existing budgets.

### **3.7 Revenue costs associated with the improvements to the core paths across Heathryfold Park (Sustrans application)**

There are existing paths in the locations of the proposed paths. These are currently maintained by the Environmental Services team. The current paths are unsuitable for a number of classes of potential users and, in places, require maintenance. The new paths will not require maintenance for a considerable period of time. It is proposed that when they do require maintenance that this will be considered within the usual budgetary process.

It is envisaged that lights will be provided to the new core routes across the Park and to the connections with Provost Rust Drive and Auchmill Road. The grant application has been made on the basis that these lights will be energy efficient LED luminaires (with detectors to reduce power output when the path is not in use). Preliminary calculations have suggested that the electrical cost of this new lighting will be of the order of £200 per annum.

### **3.8 Revenue costs associated with the improvements to Provost Rust Drive and Manor Avenue (Nestrans application)**

The existing roads are maintained by the Roads Maintenance team. These road improvements will not require maintenance for a considerable period of time. It is proposed that when these improvements do require maintenance that this will be considered within the usual budgetary process.

## **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

The objectives of this Project are:

- to improve the quality and accessibility of Heathryfold Park which currently has low value amenity: in line with Aberdeen's Open Space Audit & Strategy;
- to create a diverse matrix of habitats, connected to the wider greenspace network, so as to support biodiversity: in line with Aberdeen's Nature Conservation Strategy;
- to increase water quality and management, especially flood alleviation, by the opening and re-naturalising the Scatter Burn: in line with the Flood Risk Management Act 2009;
- to build community confidence and capacity through community collaboration during the design, delivery and long-term management processes: in line the City's Strategic Infrastructure Plan, 5 Year Business Plan; Aberdeen - The Smarter City; and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- to improve the walking and cycling routes within Middlefield and Northfield;
- to improve the connections between Middlefield/Northfield and the city-wide, core cycle network.
- to increase the accessibility of the footpaths (that cross Heathryfold Park and link with the Park) which connect a number of pre-existing public facilities, residential neighbourhoods and new facilities;
- to improve the night time accessibility of these routes for both cyclists and pedestrians;
- to increase the number of journeys made by bicycle, and on foot, within these regeneration areas (and to, and from, these areas);

- to provide cycle stands to a range of public facilities across these regeneration areas;
- to provide a direct connection from these regeneration areas to the A96 Auchmill Road cycle route (this connection will improve access to the employment opportunities to be found in Buckburn and Dyce);
- to connect the core cycle routes, to A96 Auchmill Road and Provost Rust Drive: so as to provide a means of avoiding the Haudagain junction and the forthcoming works; and
- to connect the core cycle routes to A96 Auchmill Road and Provost Rust Drive: so as to infill the missing link of a potential Bridge of Don/Garthdee cycle route, which avoids North Anderson Drive (the development of which is likely to be supported by Sustrans in 2018).

## **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

### **5.1 Where the idea for the project came from**

The initial impetus to develop this project came from a 'Total Place' consultation process that commenced in 2014. Action to tackle speeding traffic; the difficulties in crossing Provost Rust Drive (including by mobility scooter users); the lack of provision for cyclists; and the quality of the environment were all identified as priorities by this community.

In November 2015, consultations were undertaken on what improvements should be made to the Park. Children were consulted at after-schools club. Wider views were also obtained via Facebook.

An audit of the streets and paths in, and around, this Park was undertaken in June 2016 by Living Streets and members of the public.

A design consultation was undertaken for the Park proposals on 3rd September 2016. The draft Concept Design was then further reviewed and modified by community activists on 28th September 2016.

It is confirmed that a community based steering group will help guide the development of the detailed designs, so as to ensure the range of aspirations within the community are fully considered, and met where possible.

### **5.2 How this project fits into the bigger picture**

A number of regeneration projects have recently been completed and are underway within Middlefield and Northfield: “Aberdeen Treasure Hub”; the community “Hub” to Manor Avenue; the redevelopment of the Haudagain junction; the new housing developments at Byron Terrace, Marchburn Drive, Manor Walk and Smithfield Drive; and the environmental improvements of Heathryfold Park. Improving the pedestrian and cycle routes, within these neighbourhoods, will:

- **link** these new projects with each other and the other public facilities within these neighbourhoods (adding to the momentum of regenerational change to these priority neighbourhoods); and
- reduce the need for residents to use motorised forms of transport to access these facilities (with consequent improvements in road safety and air quality).

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Data Zones (2016) S01006727, S01006726, S01006729 and S01006724 (located within Middlefield and Northfield) are ranked in the 2nd most deprived decile. The regeneration of the areas of multiple deprivation within Aberdeen (including these) are a priority for Community Planning Aberdeen. The project will (for those with a low disposable income):

- reduce transport costs (releasing income for other needs);
- reduce isolation;
- improve access to public services and employment; and encourage healthier lifestyles.

Car ownership within these data zones is understood to be relatively low. A relatively high proportion of adults within these neighbourhoods rely on public transport to get to the shops, education, training and employment. Improvements to the access routes to the bus stops will:

- increase safety;
- reduce isolation, amongst those with mobility constraints; and increase the accessibility of public services and employment, amongst those with mobility constraints.

Attendance levels at Northfield Academy is significantly lower than the City’s average: this is linked to high rates of sickness. This low rate of attendance is linked to poorer academic attainment and poorer employment prospects. An environment conducive to healthy living, in the form of improved leisure facilities and increased opportunities for active travel, is expected to reduce incidences of ill health and hence improve school attendance. In addition, studies have shown that children who walk and cycle to school are more alert and are better able to absorb information. It is anticipated that this project will contribute to improved school attainment and, therefore, improved employment prospects.

The accident rate for the elderly in data zones S01006727 and S01006729 is more than twice the City’s average. This neighbourhood is also classified as a ‘high risk’ area for children. It is understood these raised accident rates are partly due to barriers the elderly and the young experience in accessing supportive and safe public facilities. This project will reduce these barriers by improving the safety and

accessibility of the routes from residents' homes to the wide range of public facilities, within these neighbourhoods.

The Aberdeen Active Travel Action Plan 2017-2021 recognises the priority that should be given to "Local Improvements", so as to achieve higher proportion of journeys being made on foot and by bicycle.

This project is aligned with the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2013/2035, "Proposals for Action: Walking and Cycling (IC6)", and "The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland".

### **5.3 How this project will improve the local area**

The Project will provide a high quality, outdoor recreational space that is readily accessible to those whose life choices are limited by their personal circumstances. It is intended that these persons will also be supported in participating in a wide range of activities within this Park. It is anticipated that these improvements and activities will have a positive effect on a range of deprivation indicators.

The strategic objectives of this Project are:

- to improve the quality and accessibility of a Park which currently has low value amenity;
- to improve the path network in this neighbourhood so as to increase and enhance the opportunities for people to get outdoors to relax, exercise and socialise;
- to create a diverse matrix of habitats, connected to the wider greenspace network, so as to support biodiversity;
- to increase water quality and management, especially flood alleviation, by the opening and re-naturalising the Scatter Burn;
- to build community confidence and capacity through community collaboration during the design, delivery and long-term management processes;
- **link** the regeneration projects with each other and the other public facilities within these neighbourhoods (adding to the momentum of generational change to these priority neighbourhoods);
- reduce the need for residents to use motorised forms of transport (with consequent improvements in road safety and air quality);
- reduce transport costs (releasing income for other needs); and

- reduce isolation and increase the accessibility of public services and employment: amongst those with mobility constraints.

## 6. IMPACT

### 6.1 Improving Customer Experience –

These recommendations are designed to meet the community's aspirations for an enhanced and safer environment.

### 6.2 Improving our use of Resources –

These recommendations re-present existing investment commitments by the Council in a manner that is designed to obtain additional funding from the European Regional Development Fund, Sustrans and Nestrans.

### 6.3 Corporate –

These recommendations are designed to meet the following Corporate objectives:

- **Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2016**
- **Aberdeen – the Smarter City:** Smarter Governance (Participation); Smarter Living (Quality of Life); Smarter People (Social and Human Capital); and Smarter Environment (Natural resources)
- **Shaping Aberdeen:** Improving Customer Experience; Improving our Use of Resources; Transform; Place; and People
- **Shaping Middlefield**
- **Joint working across Public, Community and Council organisations:**  
Communities and Housing, Land and Property, Public Infrastructure and Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development. Police Scotland. Heathryfold Allotment Holders' Association. Healthy Roots.

### 6.4 Public –

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken. It has been assessed that this project will have a positive impact

## 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The primary risks of this project are the grants being refused, or delayed.

If these grants are refused the extent of the proposed environmental improvements will have to be delayed until alternative grants are secured. In addition, the alternative grants (noted in the report of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 to the FP&R committee) will only permit relatively small scale works to be undertaken and in a piecemeal fashion.

If the grants are delayed, the programme for this project will be compressed. This may make it impractical to achieve all the intended works, in the reduced time available.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Community Planning Aberdeen, Single Outcome Agreement 2013**

**Aberdeen – the Smarter City**

**Community Planning Aberdeen Board, minutes 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

**Shaping Middlefield. Aberdeen City Council/Shaping Aberdeen**

**ACC's Open Space Strategy 2011-2016**

**ACC's Nature Conservation Strategy**

**Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2012**

**Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2016-2021**

**Flood Risk Management Act 2009**

**The River Basin Management Plan for the Scotland River Basin District: 2015-2027**

**ACC's Core Paths Plan**

**ACC's Environmental Management Policy Statement**

**Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act**

**Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Data Zones (2016)**

**Scotland's People Annual Report: results from 2014 Scottish Household Survey (Transport and Travel). Scottish Government.**

**Let's get Scotland Walking: the National Walking Strategy (2014)**

**A Policy Statement for Scotland, Designing Streets. 2010. Scottish Government.**

**Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 2017-2020. Transport Scotland**

**Aberdeen Active Travel Action Plan 2017-2021. Aberdeen City Council**

**Benefits of active travel for young people. Sustrans**

**Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2013/2035, "Proposals for Action: Walking and Cycling (IC6)".**

**Locality 2 Strategic Assessment 2016. Community Planning Aberdeen.**

**Shaping Middlefield, Planning for Real - prioritisation exercise. Aberdeen City Council/Shaping Aberdeen**

**Community Street Audit Report, Middlefield, Aberdeen City. June 2016. Living Streets**

**Safety Assessment , July 2008. SIAS Transport Planners, Edinburgh.**

**BBC News, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2010, "Partially-sighted man cleared of death charge"**

**BBC News, 15th July 2015, "Woman admits causing biker death in Aberdeen"**

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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