

CABINET

Ryelands Park and Greaves Park – Master Plans 2015-2025

1st December 2015

Report of Chief Officer (Environment)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To seek approval for the Ryelands Park and Greaves Park Master Plans 2015-2025				
Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Referral from Officer
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision	2 nd November 2015			
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To approve the master plans for Ryelands Park and Greaves Park 2015-2025.
- (2) To delegate decisions relating to the delivery of the master plans to Chief Officer (Environment), in line with financial regulations, and the previous decision of Cabinet relating to Accountable Body Authorisation for Community Groups (Aug 2015, Item 13).
- (3) That Cabinet notes the ongoing efforts of volunteers in Ryelands and Greaves Park and many other Parks and areas of open space in the District and expresses thanks for the ongoing contribution they make.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Clean, Green and Safe places are priority for the Council. A measure of success in this regard is the number of projects that directly involve local communities in improving local areas, parks and open spaces.
- 1.2 In accord with best practice work has been taking place to develop long term plans for all of parks. This ensures the council more effectively manages our parks over the next ten years through identifying the future direction of the parks, key areas to focus on for preservation, and opportunities for additional funding. Clearly in adopting this approach the Council is mindful of the bleak financial context that we face. This means that working with volunteer groups etc to help improve these vital assets in a planned way is even more important.

1.3 Key to the development and delivery of the master plans is extensive consultation with users of the park and the establishment of Friends of Groups who can then support the delivery of the agreed masterplan.

1.4 This report will focus specifically on Ryelands and Greaves Parks. Both Ryelands and Greaves Park have well established Friends of Groups who have over a number of years devoted many hours to the improvement and development of the Parks.

1.5 **Ryelands Park**

Connecting Communities in 2010 (led by Lancaster City Council) focused on making Skerton an even better place to work and live.

Ryelands park was identified as having great potential to provide space for people to come together to socialise, be active, enjoy the green space and recreation/community facilities and provide things for young people to do.

The park also plays a key role as a community park for the whole district, providing valuable football pitch provision and hosting events that are enjoyed by our communities such as circuses, fairgrounds and car boot sales.

In response to the Connecting Communities exercise Lancaster City Council initiated the Ryelands Park Community Regeneration Project in 2011 and in 2012 a Friends of Ryelands Park was established. Since then partners have worked together to develop a vision and a masterplan for the park.

The vision for the park is;

To restore Ryelands Park as a focal point for the community and to provide a safe, attractive environment which everyone can enjoy.

The main aim of the park is provision of -

A sustainable community space that is flexible enough for events, or for people to simply appreciate the beauty of the park

The following key Objectives for the park and masterplan were identified as;

- *Create a community hub, radiating from the historic buildings in the centre of the park* (café, toilets, community spaces, enterprising communities/ training, gardens and landscaping).
- *Community Sport and Active Lifestyle hub for all generations* – large scale BMX facilities to meet district wide need and aspiration for such a facility, walks and fitness (mark out walks, fitness equipment, digital apps to facilitate walking, games, fitness and active lifestyle activities); new pavilion for changing/ toilets and kiosk/ income generation.
- *Community led, facilities and activities to encourage participation and action.* A dedicated performance space with the flexibility for other uses.(extend and

improve existing play facilities, seating and cohesion, landscaping and design)

- *Develop infrastructure, make the park work and accommodate a significant increase in visitor numbers* (both local and some destination, e.g. the BMX facilities) – streamlined and improved parking, new access and routes (vehicular and pedestrian).
- *Protect and enhance the natural assets.* Maintain the open space ‘feeling’ to the park, Preserve and enhance the trees and other natural assets encouraging wildlife.

Significant work has already taken place to deliver some of the above. The FoG group have been able to access funds from a variety of sources that have enhanced the park. Furthermore the use of the park for commercial events such as circuses and funfairs has increased significantly in the last year or so. This in turn has generated a valuable source of income for the Council.

Greaves Park/ Parkfield

It is apparent that local people do not differentiate between Greaves and Parkfield Parks and therefore for the purpose of this report ‘Greaves Park’ refers to both Greaves and Parkfield parks

The site is approximately 6.4ha in total and is made up of the grounds of two large houses - Greaves House and Parkfield House. It is a mixture of open grassed areas with individual trees and small wooded areas. The site slopes from the east to west, offering fantastic views across the city to Morecambe Bay and the Cumbrian Fells.

Lancaster City Council and the friends group have worked together to develop a vision and masterplan for the park.

The vision for the park;

We consider The Greaves Park to be a hidden gem full of green spaces, wonderful trees, and lovely green paths from which to enjoy the park and the views over the city to the Cumbrian Fells. Much of the park cannot be seen from the roads that pass by it, and many people are not aware of the extent of the park or its many aspects. Our vision is to make the public more aware of the park and to encourage people to come in and enjoy it in all its variety.

The aim is to protect and enhance the many features that make The Greaves Park so special. These include:

- The opportunities for children and families to play, and to enjoy the semi-wild parts of the park.
- The network of green paths in the park which provide a green and peaceful route through and around the park.

- The beautiful trees in the park, and the spring flowering bulbs. We also hope to encourage more flowering plants, both for their beauty and for their benefit to wildlife.
- The rich variety of wildlife. Our vision is to protect and encourage the ecological variety in the park by protecting the various wildlife habitats, and the peace and tranquillity of the wilder parts of the park.
- The views over the city and Morecambe Bay and the Cumbrian Fells. Our vision is to provide one or more high clearings from which to enjoy the views over the city and the Morecambe Bay area at their best.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 Over the last few years a comprehensive consultation process has taken place to develop long term master plans for the two parks. **The master plans and further information on the parks are attached in the appendices.** Cabinet should note that during the consultation process it has been made very clear that, due to the financial pressures facing the Council, delivery of the master plan is entirely dependent on accessing external funding.

2.2 It is extremely unlikely that the Council itself would be eligible for external funding. However, as outlined there are well- established 'Friends of' group in the parks. These volunteers have over a number of years now devoted many hours to improving the park. The combination of a long term vision for the park, Council commitment to the future of the Park and a thriving 'Friends of' group means that with ongoing support from the Council there is a realistic prospect of the master plan being delivered.

2.3 The master plan for Ryelands Parks identifies two projects an adventure play area and BMX pump track, to bring forward in the next year or so. If external funding was forthcoming Cabinet should note that there will be ongoing revenue requirements for maintenance of the new features which would need to be considered. In the first instance Officers would seek to redirect existing budgets.

2.4 Also relevant to the delivery of masterplans is the decision Cabinet made in Aug 2015 (item 13)

(1) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Officer (Environment), in agreement with the Section 151 Officer, to approve the making and acceptance of external funding bids above the key decision threshold where:

any such bid is for the purposes of improving public open space in the District;
and;

it can be contained within the budget and policy framework and would not require redirection of resources between service areas, functions or activities on an ongoing basis.

(2) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in agreement with the Chief Officer (Environment), to adopt the role of "accountable body" where appropriate, in order to support formally constituted 'Friends of' and community groups in helping to improve public open space in the District,

subject to due diligence and any financial implications being contained within the budget and policy framework.

(3) That that above delegations remain in place until July 2017 and be subject to review at that time.

3.0 Details of Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken at various stages throughout the process of developing the plan. This has involved questionnaire based consultations, meeting with officers and stakeholders and advertised public consultation sessions in the park.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Approve the master plans for delivery	Option 2: Continue without master plans
Advantages	<p>The master plans help focus current and future resources on areas and attractions that will enhance the park.</p> <p>The plans will also help support applications to external funders to preserve and enhance the park</p>	<p>The opportunities to preserve and enhance the park through additional funding support would be very much reduced.</p> <p>There would be no clear guidance to the development of the park. This can be particularly difficult when considering new opportunities.</p>
Disadvantages		Less potential for external funding opportunities
Risks	Funding for development is not secured. If the volunteer groups disband it would be difficult for the council to obtain funding from external sources.	The park may slip into decline without proper forward planning

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 5.1 The preferred option is option 1. The parks are very popular and well used it is importance to have a plan for the future to ensure they remain popular.
- 5.2 The ongoing maintenance requirements for the proposed adventure play area and BMX pump track at Ryelands Park should be noted.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The master plans will assist in allocating current and future resources within the parks, to both preserve the parks and enhance their assets.
- 6.2 The plans will help support applications to external funders to preserve and enhance the park.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

As outlined in the report

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The master plans take account of design issues relating to accessibility, community safety, sustainability etc. As the master plans are delivered individual elements will be assessed for impact.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None as a result of this report

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Whilst the revenue budget includes provision to support the operational aspects of the parks, there is no scope to contribute financially towards the delivery of the master plans with the exception of officer time.

The master plans may contain a mixture of capital and revenue expenditure and where capital expenditure is incurred such as building a BMX track at Ryelands Park, there will be on-going capital charges and revenue costs for maintaining newly generated assets which will have an impact on revenue budgets in future years. It will be a requirement, however, that the ongoing maintenance costs can be met from whatever approved budgets are in place at that time. If this is not possible, then the relevant project would not go ahead.

Therefore, any subsequent bids for external funding that are made by the friends groups are subject to appropriate due diligence prior to support being given. Should the Council then take on the role of accountable body under Officer delegations, where relevant the approved budgets (subject to there being a nil impact) would be updated to enable their implementation. This would also be actioned under Officer delegations.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

None

Information Services:

None

Property:

As outlined in the report

Open Spaces:

As outlined in the report

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

none

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