

Response to Ryelands Park Petition 28th September 2016

Report of Chief Officer (Environment)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To set out an officer response to the petition that will be presented regarding Ryelands Park

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHIEF OFFICER (Environment)

- (1) That the report and appendices are noted

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A petition relating to Ryelands Park has been presented to the Council and will be accompanied by an address. The Council's petition scheme states that any petition with 200 signatures or more, where it relates to a local matter which affects no more than two wards, will schedule a debate at Council. The petition does have in excess of 200 signatures and the debate has been scheduled for the meeting today. This report provides Members with information to inform the debate.
- 1.2 Clean and Green Places are priority for the Council. The Council also recognises that in order to achieve this there is a need to increase involvement of local communities in improving local areas, parks and open spaces. Ryelands Park, like many of our parks, has an active 'friends of' group that works with the Council to improve the park.
- 1.3 The efforts made by volunteers who work hard to help improve the District as whole are very much recognised and appreciated by the Council.
- 1.4 What is also recognised is that on occasion the views of citizens who care very much about the District will sometimes conflict with how the Council manages in this case its open space.
- 1.5 This is very much a case in point. As the 'steward' of the District the Council now has the role of considering the issues raised by the petition and determining the best way forward.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to provide an officer response in order for Council to consider the matter in a balanced way. The Officer response is set within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan, budget and the agreed masterplan for Ryelands Park.
- 1.7 As will become clear the management of Ryelands Park provides an excellent example of the Council engaging with communities to develop a plan for how the park should be used and developed.

- 1.8 It is recognised though that on occasions there will be specific things that occur that will cause concern. This petition was sparked following an event in 2015. As will be seen in the report measures have been put in place to resolve the concerns raised.
- 1.9 In terms of background 'Connecting Communities' in 2010 (led by Lancaster City Council) focused on making Skerton an even better place to work and live.
- 1.10 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.
- 1.11 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.
- 1.12 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. This masterplan was approved by Cabinet in December 2015. The outline of the masterplan is attached in the appendices. (Especially relevant to this is that Cabinet agreed that a specific area of the park should be allocated for use for fairgrounds and circuses).
- 1.13 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, and 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.

1.14 Significant work has already taken place to deliver some of the above. The ‘Friends of’ Group has 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, some of which has been reinvested in improving the park (eg drainage).

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 The response to the points made in the petition is attached at Appendix A.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 The masterplan for Ryelands Park was developed following extensive consultation.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The provision of ‘Clean and Green Places’ are one of the priorities of the Council’s Corporate Plan.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

As outlined in the report and appendices

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Any commercial enterprise wishing to use council owned land is subject to terms and conditions of use

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

For information, the park generates annual income of £10K from events and a further £4K from football pitch hire.

The associated grounds maintenance cost with the park is £38K per annum which includes mowing, tree pruning, daily bin emptying and weekly inspection of the play area.

Recent one-off investment of over £100K has taken place in 2013/14 through the installation of a new play area and in 2015/16 a £10K programme of works to address the drainage problems at the park.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

NA

Information Services:

NA

Property:

NA

Open Spaces:

As detailed in the report and appendices

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 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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