

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	21 October 2015
Subject:	Robinswood Hill Master Plan & Parks for People Funding Bid		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Parks for People Funding Information		
	2. Draft Memorandum of Understanding		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the progress made with the Robinswood Hill Master Plan Project and to seek approval to pursue Heritage Lottery Fund, Parks for People funding in partnership with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) The contents of the report be noted;
- (2) The draft Memorandum of Understanding (included at Appendix 2) be endorsed for completion;
- (3) Approval be granted for Officers to jointly develop a Master Plan in partnership with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust;
- (4) Use of the plan in providing a framework for decision making on Robinswood Hill over the next 10 years be supported;
- (5) Approval be granted for Officers to work in partnership with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to develop a Big Lottery/Heritage Lottery Fund, Parks for People funding bid for improvements to Robinswood Hill, and
- (6) Capital receipts raised from the sale of Woods Orchard Car Park be utilised to jointly fund a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust post over 2 years, which will have a specific remit to develop Master Plan, gather necessary evidence to submit a Parks for People Funding Bid and prepare and submit the Bid.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 Realising the benefits of working together to deliver improvements to Robinswood Hill in 2012, Gloucester City Council entered into an informal partnership with GWT and Gloucester City Homes (GCH). The main output of which has been the 'All Paths Lead to the Hill Project'.
- 3.2 The project has been a huge success with numbers of visitors increasing by over 40% during the period of the project. Many events have been run, and volunteer groups engaged. There have also been significant infrastructure improvements related to the project including the café and new access path/drive.
- 3.3 To help fund the project a successful Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for £92,000 was submitted by GWT to pay for Project Officers and capital improvements to the infrastructure on the hill. As of August the funding for that particular project has come to a close.
- 3.4 The intention is that this is just the start of a longer process that will culminate in a large lottery bid that could include a proposal to develop a new visitor centre or other infrastructure at Robinswood Hill. To help deliver this bid an application was submitted to HLF which would have allowed the project to continue and critical to the process was the gathering of evidence required as part of the large capital bid.
- 3.5 This application was encouraged by HLF and submitted in May 2015. Unfortunately our application was rejected as it was viewed as a continuation of an existing project rather than a new one. Positively however, further discussions with HLF have revealed that the Big Lottery/HLF joint fund is the best location for the current focus of our work and in particular a new visitor centre.
- 3.6 Officers of the Council and GWT are very much committed to developing the project however to build confidence for both parties a draft MOU has been drawn up to be signed by both parties. Irrespective of this GWT have committed to extending the Project Officer's contract. We are now classing this current stage of the project as Stage 2, with stage 3 being a final, large scale capital lottery bid for physical improvements.
- 3.7 As a Council we have previously committed to support the GWT Project Officers contract by £6,000 per year contingent on the sale of Woods Orchard car park on Robinswood Hill. GWT has asked if the Council would consider increasing the level of financial support it can provide to £12k a year over the 2 year project period and in principle Officers have no objection to this proposal.
- 3.8 This report seeks approval to continue to Stage 2 of the project and if granted this will allow the Council and GWT to continue the good work in engaging with local communities. The GWT Project Officers will now cast the net further afield to cover the whole of Gloucester. Importantly it will allow us to draw up a master plan for Robinswood Hill that will cover the appropriateness of new buildings, zones where different uses can be accommodated, plus take on ideas such as sculpture trails, access improvements and car parking arrangements.
- 3.9 As part of the wider process a 3D model of the hill has already been constructed and alongside an aerial photograph is being used to guide debate and focus

people's attention. This has already been showcased to Cabinet Members and will have numerous outings over the coming months. Of particular interest will be a senior stakeholder meeting planned this autumn where all elected Members will be invited to put forward their thoughts.

3.10 Over the next two years as information is gathered, it is the intention that a bid will be submitted to The BIG Lottery/HLF Parks for People fund. As land owner the City Council will be required to be the main partner with a bid of between £2 and £5 million likely to be sought depending on the outcome of the consultation exercise it likely this will focus on a new visitor centre.

3.11 It is anticipated that the actual grant application is jointly written by the Grant Development Officers at GWT and Environmental Planning Manager at the City Council and for it to receive Cabinet endorsement prior to being submitted.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

4.1 The current project is very much community led with the Project Officers seeking views of and engaging with local people at every stage of the project. A significant part of stage 2 will further this work by seeking out what people want from Robinswood Hill and how they can help deliver it. Indeed the lottery will expect such if we are to have a good chance of securing a significant investment from them.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

5.1 Do nothing; this would lose an opportunity for significant capital investment in Robinswood Hill. It would also hinder the good working relationship we have developed with GWT and make vulnerable their position within the City.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 Significant work has been implemented around Robinswood Hill over the past two years and many of the improvements have been outlined in this report. Continued close working with GWT is proving very productive and it would seem sensible for this to continue. Feedback received from the HLF provides us with confidence that future funding bids can be successful.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

7.1 It is the intention that the Project Officers carries on with the community development work and capital improvements to the Hill as well as become involved in the bid writing process. If the final bid is successful inevitably there will be significant work around the design and build of a new visitor infrastructure. This will require input from the Environmental Planning Team and Asset Management.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 If approved the Council will contribute £12k over next 2 years to a GWT Project Officer's post. It is anticipated that this money will be generated from the sale of Woods Orchard Car Park. It is the intention that the Parks for People bid is for the capital works for the Visitor Centre in their entirety. As the Project Officer will be

working on the capital funding bid it would be possible to use capital receipts for this post.

- 8.2 As the City Council will be the main body submitting the application we need to be aware of other bids for similar lottery funding that the City is putting forward to avoid any conflicts. There will of course be Officers' time in the bid but no extra costs are envisaged at this stage. If successful the partnership will need to contribute up to 10% of the development and delivery phase of the proposal. This can however be in kind, Officers' time, land value etc. Whatever the outcome of the consultation exercise, and the form of the final bid it needs to be apparent that any infrastructure proposed is not a financial burden on the City Council or the Wildlife Trust. If at any time the City feels that there are financial risks associated with the project then they have the option not to proceed.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 One Legal have been involved in the drafting of the MOU and will be consulted with regarding the bid and any conditional award if received.

(One Legal have been involved in the preparation of this report)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 The following risks and opportunities have been identified –

Risks	Opportunities
Bid is unsuccessful	A new Visitor Centre
Loss of key personnel	Greater use of Robinswood hill
Long term financial sustainability of any visitor centre/infrastructure	Closer working and integration with GWT

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 11.1 The PIA screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 12.1 There are no implications with regard to community safety in respect of this report.

Sustainability

- 12.2 The intention is that any new infrastructure will be an exemplar of sustainability. Any improvements to the Country Park would be carried out in a manner that improves the sustainability of the whole site.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 No staffing or trade union implications have been identified.

Press Release

12.4 Given the current status of the project a press release is not considered necessary.

Background Documents: None