

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Capital Budget Expenditure for Cityparks</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> June 2019</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director, Economy, Environment &amp; Culture</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Paul Campbell</b>	<b>Tel: 07816753581</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>(All Wards);</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The 2019/20 Budget Council in February 2019 approved a revised capital investment programme to include £1.7 million for investment in city wide improvements to supplement planned investment through the Local Transport Plan 2019/20 and investment in Cityparks. Of this £700,000 has been identified to support the investment in Cityparks.
- 1.2 It is recommended that some of the budget is used to deliver some of the objectives of the Open Spaces Strategy 2017.
- 1.3 Namely to increase play opportunities across the city by investment in new children's play equipment.
- 1.4 Further to this, to improve the management of council woodland and on street tree stock. This will also contribute to the objective to work towards carbon reduction and improve the biodiversity and look of the city by 2030, through a tree planting programme and improved management of existing on street trees and woodlands.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee:

- 2.1 Agrees that £700,000 from the revised capital investment programme budget will be used to support investment in Cityparks as follows:
  - (i) £200,000 on new children's play equipment
  - (ii) £500,000 on woodland management and tree planting
- 2.2 Approves the submission of an application to DEFRA's Urban Tree Challenge Fund for £200,000 of the government's recently announced Urban Tree Fund.

### **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Open Spaces Strategy reported that around £2 million of play equipment will need to be replaced over the next ten years. Some of this will be supported by developer's contributions from housing and the Cityparks revenue budget, but a gap of around £700,000 is predicted to occur.
- 3.2 The Open Spaces Strategy 'Big Conversation' consultation identified that trees and play were the top two features that Cityparks should focus maintenance resources on. Play was also the second priority for responders regarding which infrastructure across the city, Cityparks should invest in.
- 3.3 The open spaces consultation was one of the highest ever responses from the public, attracting over 3500 completed online forms.
- 3.4 Each of the city's 52 children's play areas contains multiple items costing anywhere between £2,000 - £35,000 each, (excluding safer surfacing costs), depending on their size and complexity. The 2016 State of Play report identified that around 600 items of play equipment will come to the end of their life over the next ten years.
- 3.5 The Open Space Strategy identified risks for the city regarding the tree stock. This is being evidenced by on-going tree inspections and the emerging tree strategy. It is estimated that £300,000 of new pruning works will be needed following our recent inspections.
- 3.6 To date over 100 tree stumps have been identified in pavements. Stumps are estimated to cost around £4,000 each to remove and replant new trees, which includes making good the pavements and kerbing.
- 3.7 The number of new tree plantings has reduced over the last few years in correlation with reduced budgets. The number of stumps around the city has led to public complaints and as most of them are in sites still suitable for tree planting. This funding provides an opportunity to clear some of the stumps and add more trees onto our city's streets.
- 3.8 Therefore, Cityparks are seeking to use the £700,000 as follows: £300,000 for physical pruning works and removal of diseased trees identified from inspections, £200,000 towards replanting where possible and tree stump removal.
- 3.9 The remaining £200,000 is proposed for new children's play equipment, targeting areas that developers contributions cannot reach, typically [but not exclusively] at the edges of the city. Cityparks intends to create one large play contract for tenders incorporating developer's contributions. This is to be delivered over 2-3 years.
- 3.10 The government has recently announced a £10 million fund to deliver 130,000 urban trees to help tackle climate change. This is being delivered as a challenge fund that will require match funding from Local Authorities. It is therefore recommended that the council applies for £200,000 from this fund.

## 4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Alternatives to the proposed tree and play focus would have been a range of smaller projects linked to accessibility which is another area of development central to parks and open spaces i.e., benches, gates, cycle stands, signs etc.
- 4.2 However Cityparks are aware that trying to deliver a range of smaller projects would be even more time consuming than implementing larger ones. Therefore there is a resource and deliverability implication which is why Cityparks are focusing on two primary areas.

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Open Spaces Strategy consultation provides a robust steer from the public to guide the development of their park infrastructure across the city.
- 5.2 However additional professional consultations have taken place internally with City Transport and externally with the Trees and Design Action Group and the Forestry Commission.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The three proposed projects for the £700,000 capital budget are:
- £300,000 towards pruning works and the removal of diseased trees
  - £200,000 for tree stump removal and replanting of new trees.
  - £200,000 for investment into new children's play equipment.
- 6.2 If approved Cityparks course of action would be to:
- Plant in the region of 50 new trees and remove up to 50 stumps within two years
  - If match funding is agreed a further 50 stumps could be removed and new trees replanted.
  - Improve between 10-20 play areas across the city in 2-3 years,
  - Complete the pruning and removal of diseased trees to improve the city's woodland and on street tree management over two years,
  - Report back on the works programme as part of the Open Spaces Strategy.
- 6.3 It should be noted that the location of where the investment is to be spent will be determined by the annual play inspection report and the emerging tree reports. Furthermore, each tree location will need to be considered in consultation with City Transport as to the Highway implications.

## 7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The 2019/20 Budget Council in February 2019 approved a revised capital investment programme to include £1.7 million for investment in city wide improvements. Cityparks have identified a requirement for investment of £0.700 million over two years to support the Open Spaces Strategy. Some aspects of the proposed 2 year investment do not meet the definition of capital expenditure, in particular the £0.300 million allocation for pruning and removal of diseased

trees. This expenditure can be classified as spend to save or supporting longer term efficiencies and therefore can be capitalised through the governments 'capital receipts flexibilities' as long as the expenditure occurs before 31/3/2022. To facilitate this, the funding of the estimated £0.300 million for pruning and removal of diseased trees will be switched to capital receipts within the agreed overall general fund capital programme funding in 2019/20. There will be no detriment to financial and capital resources of the Council's Capital Investment Programme as a result of this.

- 7.2 If the proposed investment is approved, the capital programme will be amended through the Month 2 Targeted Budget Management (TBM) report to PRG in July 2019.
- 7.3 The allocation of this funding will support an application to the Urban Tree Fund as match funding for £0.200 million grant. If this application is successful, the capital programme will be amended accordingly through a TBM report to PRG.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen*

*Date: 23/05/19*

- 7.4 In accordance with Part 4 of the council's Constitution, Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee is the appropriate decision-making body in respect of the recommendations set out in paragraph 2 above.
- 7.5 The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 will apply in relation to the procurement and award of any contracts for the supply and installation of play equipment, and woodland management and tree planting which are over the relevant financial thresholds in value. In addition, the council's Contract Standing Orders will apply to the procurement and award of any contracts.

*Lawyer Consulted: Isabella Sidoli*

*Date: 13/06/19*

Equalities Implications:

- 7.6 These works will have a positive equalities benefit. The removal of tree stumps and improvement to the pavements will benefit everybody especially those with limited mobility of visual impairments as the ground surface will be more accessible.
- 7.7 The development of new children's play equipment will benefit all, as Cityparks has always incorporated a high level of accessible items where possible in most play areas.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.8 More trees in a city are proven to: Absorb carbon dioxide, soak up a range of pollutants and toxins which are emitted by our everyday activities, cool the city, increase and sustain biodiversity.
- 7.9 Root barriers used around the newly planted trees (along with the tree selection), will also reduce the pavements and roads being uplifted in the future. It is proposed that where tree stumps have been removed and a new tree pit

installed, the finish surface will be water porous therefore assisting in flood alleviation.

- 7.10 Children's and youth play will have a more detrimental impact on global resources but companies sustainability credential will be considered regarding their use of sustainable wood, where their source and manufacture their products and where they operate from.

Any Other Significant Implications:

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.11 A growing body of evidence is indicating that well maintained trees and planting can reduce crime. Study regarding this phenomena can be found in the UK and the US:  
[https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20323/trees/577/the\\_benefits\\_of\\_urban\\_trees](https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20323/trees/577/the_benefits_of_urban_trees)  
<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2012/05/can-trees-actually-deter-crime/2107/>

Public Health Implications:

- 7.12 Tree pruning works will ensure Council owned trees are not a threat to the public health.
- 7.13 New tree planting will benefit the public mental/physical health as trees are proven to improve wellbeing. The repair of pavements following the stump removal will reduce the risk of the general public tripping on roots, tarmac or raised pavements.
- 7.14 New children's play equipment will have significant health benefits in removing old facilities and replacing new more enjoyable items with increased play value where possible.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.15 The repair of pavements following the stump removal will reduce the risk of the general public tripping on roots, tarmac or raised pavements and therefore potentially the number of insurance claims against the council.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Play list 2019-2021

### **Background Documents**

1. None

