

Subject:	Review of Valley Gardens, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Stanmer Park Restoration Project Task and Finish Member Working Groups		
Date of Meeting:	21 January 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Oliver Spratley	Tel: 01273 290 390
	Email:	Oliver.spratley@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
	Name:	Rob Dumbrill	Tel: 01273 293 007
	Email:	Rob.dumbrill@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 Three Task & Finish Member Working Groups (MWGs) have been established by the Environment, Transport & Sustainability [ETS] Committee to provide members with practical oversight of key workstream/project progress and task completion, and to support planned and ad hoc stakeholder engagement. The status and arrangements of the MWGs for the following three projects are to be considered through this report in accordance with the council's Constitution; Valley Gardens, Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan [LCWIP], and the Stanmer Park Restoration Project. The report provides the context to review and determine the future status, and subsequent arrangement for, each of the MWGs.
- 1.2 The status of the current MWGs has been raised at different forums, including the most recent Valley Gardens and LCWIP Task & Finish MWGs, and at the November meeting of the ETS Committee.
- 1.3 This report notes the progress made through each of the MWGs to date, as summarised in Appendix 1, and outlines the possible options for the MWGs' future status and arrangements. A preferred option for the MWGs is recommended to ensure that each MWG can best facilitate members collaboratively supporting the remaining work required to complete each of the three projects noted above. Revised Terms of Reference [ToR] are proposed for each MWG as detailed within Appendices 2, 3 and 4.
- 1.4 This report is only dealing with these three MWGs at this time in order to meet the Constitution's requirements. A report reviewing MWGs more fully will be brought to the March meeting of this committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Policy and Resources Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the achievements of the three Task & Finish Member Working Groups for Valley Gardens, the Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan and the Stanmer Park Restoration Project, as summarised in Appendix 1 of this report;
- 2.2 Agrees that the Valley Gardens, Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan and Stanmer Park Restoration Project Task & Finish Member Working Groups status, be made permanent.
- 2.2 Agrees the Terms of Reference for the Valley Gardens, Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan and Stanmer Park Restoration Project Member Working Groups as set out in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 of this report, and that the Constitution be amended accordingly.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference (ToR) of any new permanent MWG must be agreed by Policy & Resources [P&R] Committee and furthermore, be included in the council's Constitution, and must be reviewed annually. Task and Finish MWGs may be established by a relevant Policy Committee.
- 3.2 Three Task & Finish MWGs were established by the ETS Committee in October 2019, following a report to the July 2019 meeting of this committee and Full Council, also in July 2019. MWG's were established for the Valley Gardens project, the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), and the Stanmer Park Restoration Project. Each of the MWGs had its duration either stipulated or implied within its Terms of Reference.
- 3.3 However, as described above, the council's Constitution sets out a time-limited period with an option to extend, allowing a total period of 12 months. These periods are taken to be based on the date of the first meeting. Therefore, the future of each of the MWG's must now be reviewed and considered by this committee.
- 3.4 The three MWGs were active across the following periods (either-side of the period when they were suspended between April – July due to the pandemic):
 - Valley Gardens - 15/1/20 – 30/07/20 (Three meetings)
 - LCWIP – 10/12/19 – 6/10/20 (Three meetings)
 - Stanmer Park – 5/12/19 – 06/08/20 (Three meetings)
- 3.5 Therefore, the six-month period has passed and none of the groups have been extended formally, although this period was interrupted by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent mitigation measures such as national lockdown, and the subsequent decision by the council to suspend MWGs in Spring 2020.
- 3.6 Following the end of the first Covid-19 wave, the July 2020 P&R Committee agreed to the reinstatement of MWG meetings, though virtually held meetings.

- 3.7 The council's Constitution set out the powers relating to establishing a task and finish group as:- *'to appoint task and finish member Working Groups which are time-limited (six months, with the option to extend for a further six months), in order to carry out focused pieces of work, reporting back regularly to their parent body.'*
- 3.8 When considering the proposed principles associated with MWGs established as a 'task and finish' group, Full Council agreed that such groups may be established on the following basis:
- A cross party member working group that is established by either a service committee or by Audit and Standards Committee will be known as a 'task and finish' group;
 - They will be set up for 6 months with the possibility of an extension of up to a further 6 months;
 - They will be expected to report back to the committee which established them on a regular basis;
 - Their terms of reference will need to be agreed by the committee, using the Council's template;
 - The task and finish groups should include the Chairs or Deputy Chairs of the relevant committee, or members nominated by their Group Leader to ensure oversight and a strong link to that committee.
- 3.9 Further to a P&R Committee decision in December 2019, it has been agreed that the Chair of each MWG shall be appointed from the council's largest political group unless Policy & Resources Committee has made other express provision.
- 3.10 Given the elapsed time and disruption caused by Covid-19, and to facilitate further member oversight of the projects' key activities, through the three MWGs, it is recommended that each MWG status should become permanent.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The options for the future of each Task & Finish MWG are:
1. To end the group on the basis that it is no longer required;
 2. To extend the group for an appropriate period, in line with the Constitution;
 3. To make the Member Working Group permanent
- 4.2 During the period beyond the specified six months in the Constitution, the groups have continued to meet. In November, the Chair of the ETS Committee indicated that, for continuity in the interim, the groups could continue to 'meet' virtually and informally, if required. Alternatively, the Members involved could still receive relevant information or updates from officers that would have been discussed at any planned or future meeting of the group, including a review of its Terms of Reference.
- 4.3 Valley Gardens Phases 1 & 2 are now substantially complete. Following the procurement of the required professional services contract, Phase 3 is to progress to detailed design stage, and the Task & Finish MWG can provide valuable oversight through the remaining scheme design process, which will feed into the final scheme design being presented to ETS Committee in early 2021. The construction contract procurement will follow with construction to commence in 2021.

- 4.4 At the most recent Valley Gardens Task & Finish MWG meeting (27 July 2020), it was noted that a review of the status of the MWG was due given that six months had expired. Members agreed that the MWG status should be reviewed so that it could continue insofar as to cover the remaining design process, which would commence following the required professional services contract procurement process.
- 4.5 At the most recent meeting of the LCWIP Task & Finish MWG (6 October 2020) members discussed the LCWIP programme and the required prioritisation of the (Covid19) Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 programme. It was agreed that there should be a clear separation of those two public consultation processes, resulting in the extension of the LCWIP programme to the end of 2021.
- 4.6 The Stanmer Park Restoration Task and Finish MWG last met in August 2020. Future meetings of the MWG would facilitate members having a role in providing oversight in the completion of the Heritage Lottery Fund project. Although the construction phase is nearing completion the project extends into 2022 on the activity plan, engagement with the public and the development of the overall vision and direction for the estate, the changes to the City Parks depot are also still in development.
- 4.7 Therefore, for all three projects, given the remaining work that is still required to achieve completion, or an appropriate point in their development, it is recommended that the MWGs should be made permanent in order to comply with the Constitution, and to ensure that the MWG's can meet to provide continued oversight of these important projects. The work of MWGs is reviewed annually by the Constitution Working Group and any permanent MWGs that have concluded their work can be disbanded, if agreed by this committee.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The three Task & Finish MWG's which have been established were expected to provide an opportunity for additional external stakeholder involvement, and consultation as set out in each respective ToR, in addition to providing Member oversight of the project's progress and tasks pertaining to previous ETS Committee decisions. The level of engagement that has occurred is set out in the summary of the groups' achievements in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The Chairs of each MWG have conferred with the other members of the group to consider its future and its Terms of Reference.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The MWGs can continue to function as advisory groups reporting to the parent committee if their status is made permanent. The MWGs provide and facilitate members and key stakeholders the opportunity for engagement in - and oversight of - the ongoing development and delivery of the three projects noted in this report.

- 6.2 The MWG meetings have proven to be effective when circumstances have allowed them to take place, both before first national (Covid-19) lockdown and following the suspension period, through virtual meetings. Given the previous status of the MWG's and the need for further member oversight, permanent status for the MWG's is the viable and effective option that can be reviewed annually through the Constitution and maintained by the parent committee members on the respective MWG, supported by officers.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications associated with the considerations within this report. The report has been prepared in order to ensure that the operation of the three Task & Finish MWGs fulfil the requirements of the council's Constitution and that they effectively provide members the required level of oversight to support successful completion of council business and project outcomes such as community welfare.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jill Fisher

Date: 07/12/2020

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 As set out in the report, Member Working Groups [MWGs] which are to be in place for a period in excess of 12 months require approval by P&R Committee. MWGs are reviewed by the Constitution Working Group on an annual basis and if the work of the permanent MWG has been concluded this group can be reviewed and a proposal to disband the MWG will be taken to P&R as part of a Constitution Review report.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 09/12/2020

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Equality Impact Assessments have been drafted for all three projects and evolve throughout the lifecycle of a project. MWGs provide an initial forum for issues related to Equalities and Accessibility to be raised, as and when required.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 All three projects have objectives linked to improving the sustainability of the city for its whole community and visitors. Objectives are directly linked to improving sustainable quality of the city's environment and infrastructure. MWGs can help support successful outcomes.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.7 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 Each project is aligned to council policy and uses the standard council risk register. Risk is assessed regularly. MWGs provide a further layer of project risk mitigation and stakeholder involvement, which can help ensure that opportunities and successful project outcomes are realised.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 Each of the projects noted in this report are either directly linked to, or will provide additional support for, improving public health outcomes.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.8 All three MWGs will support projects that will improve access and quality of the public highway/realm, green infrastructure and the visitor experience for all.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Summary of achievements of the three MWGs
2. Terms of Reference - Valley Gardens MWG
3. Terms of Reference – Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan MWG
4. Terms of Reference – Stanmer Park Restoration Project MWG

Background Documents

1. Reports (agenda items 8, 14 and 17) to, and minutes of, Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee – 26 June 2019
2. Report to Policy, Resources & Growth Committee (agenda item 18) – 11 July 2019
3. Report to Full Council (agenda item 22) – 25 July 2019
4. Agenda Item 38 Member Involvement (b) Written Questions (iv) to and Minutes (tbc.) of Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee - 24 November 2020