

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 14 March 2019



Report Title: Approval to Spend Highways England Contribution Funding for Church Road Play Area and Open Space, Sevington, Ashford

Report Author & Job Title: Amanda Scott, Play and Open Spaces Project Officer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Mike Bennett
Portfolio Holder for: Culture, Leisure, Environment and Heritage

Summary:

Funding has been secured by Ashford Borough Council from Highways England in negotiation as a result of compulsory purchase of a portion of designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) land at Church Road Open Space in Sevington owned by Ashford Borough Council. The compulsory purchase enabled the current Highway works at Junction 10a of the M20.

The agreement with Highways England sets out how the provisions will be used to improve and enhance the play area and open space at Church Road Open Space LNR.

It is proposed to use the provisions to carry out these improvements and enhancements in consultation with local residents, children and families and Mersham and Sevington Parish Council.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: Highfield

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

- I. Approve spending of Highways England Funding of £138,343.85 on the project detailed in this report which aims to improve the Church Road Play Area and Open Space;**
- II. Give authority to the Head of Culture, in collaboration with appropriate officers, to complete all tasks and to execute and complete all documentation necessary to deliver the project and give effect to the above recommendation.**

Policy Overview: This project meets Priority 3 of the Corporate Plan to provide a range of leisure and sports facilities.

Financial Implications: Project costs totalling £138,343.85 will be covered by the appropriate Highways England funding. No other funding is implicated in these improvement works. Aspire will manage

the ongoing grounds maintenance of the open space including the play area thereafter.

Legal Implications A funding agreement is in place with Highways England which the project proposal will need to adhere to.

Equalities Impact Assessment See Attached

Other Material Implications: -

Exempt from Publication: **NO**

Background Papers: Agreement relating to open space and replacement land in connection with the proposed M20 Junction 10A Development Consent Order

Church Road Play Area and Open Space Location Plan

Contact: amanda.scott@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330393

Report Title: Approval to Spend Highways England Contribution Funding – Church Road Play Area and Open Space

Introduction and Background

1. Funding has been secured from Highways England as part of the Compulsory Purchase arrangements of Ashford Borough Council land at Church Road Open Space, to construct the new Junction 10a on the M20. An agreement was formed, agreeing to the payment of £138,343.85 from Highways England, towards improvements on Church Road Play Area and Open Space in Sevington.
2. Accordingly, the agreement states the following arrangement: *‘The Council agrees to use the Church Road Open Space Contribution (£138,343.85) for the purpose of enhancement of the Church Road Open Space only substantially in accordance with the schedule of refurbishments at Schedule 2’*. A list of play area refurbishment works are detailed in Schedule 2 of the agreement and forms the basis of the works required which include:
 - removal of all existing play equipment and surfacing
 - supply and installation of new play and leisure equipment for a range of age groups and abilities with new safety surfacing
 - supply and installation of new ancillary items (seating, bins, etc)
 - improvements to entrances and desire routes to enable better accessibility for all abilities to the play area and open space.
3. The funding contribution has now been received by the Council and officers seek agreement to apply the contribution to enable the design and delivery of an appropriate improvement project.
4. Officers have been consulting with the Ward Member for Highfield, Cllr Gerald White, and Sevington and Mersham Parish Council, who support the proposal.

Project Proposal

5. The play area on Church Road Open Space is in poor condition as identified in the Condition Audit of Ashford Borough Play Areas in 2017. Most of the equipment is over 30 years old and at the end of its functional lifespan. It is proposed that the Highways England funding is used to update and upgrade the current play facilities as per the agreement with Highways England.
6. The design specification will be based on consultation with local residents, children and families and encompass play opportunities for all age groups, abilities and diversities within the local community. Inclusivity and accessibility will be addressed within the design.

7. A tender process will be undertaken to procure the appropriate services of a playground manufacturer, to design and build play and leisure improvements in the play area and adjoining open space.
8. It is expected that installation works would start before the school summer holidays this year.

Implications and Risk Assessment

9. It will be important to ensure community consultation is clear about what can be delivered within the cost envelope to ensure community expectations are realistic but also meet the needs of the local community.
10. Risks will be mitigated by the use of a fixed price tender process, use of the Council's project management software to track project delivery. Aspire maintain the area and once the works are delivered will continue to do so. Thus future and repairs and maintenance requirements will be considered as part of the design and tender process.

Equalities Impact Assessment

11. There are no issues arising under the EIA agreed by Management Team.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

12. A consultation with local residents, children and families will be concluded to inform the design specification that will go out to tender. A survey has gone out to 174 local households and children at the local primary school have filled in surveys. So far over 200 surveys have been received back and are being analysed for the results to understand the initial ideas and concerns of residents
13. Church Road Open Space sits in the parish of Sevington and Mersham. Sevington and Mersham Parish Council have been consulted about the proposed scheme and have helped officers to distribute surveys to local households.
14. As Church Road Open Space is situated in a designated Local Nature Reserve, officers have already approached Natural England on the proposed project and will continue to liaise on design and delivery considerations.

Other Options Considered

15. As the Junction 10a works were having a direct impact on the footprint of Church Road Open Space, the contribution was best used on much needed improvements directly on Church Road open space as suitable compensation for the Compulsory Purchase arrangements.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

16. It is the Council's policy to involve the relevant stakeholders, in this case Parish Councils where appropriate on the use of funding in their area due to

their knowledge of local need and resident's wishes. Early consultation with the community also ensures a consensus on the use of potential funding to support community benefit.

Next Steps in Process

17. Officers with partners will focus on the type of equipment children and young people would like to see in the newly developed play area.
18. The public consultation will be completed and the data analysed. The Play and Open Spaces Project Officer will develop a design for the play area and associated open space improvements such as drainage, landscaping and furniture to produce a tender brief from the consultation results.
19. Tender submissions will be assessed accordingly and a preferred supplier selected. The Play and Open Spaces Officer will project manage the construction of the scheme. An opening event will be held with local residents, families and children to celebrate the improvements once completed in the summer.
20. Once in the ground management and maintenance of the site will be handed over to Aspire to continue ongoing inspections and repairs.

Conclusion

21. Use of the Highways England funding to upgrade and improve the play area and open space at Church Road positively mitigates for the impact of the Junction 10a works in the local area.
22. Including residents and local children in the consultation ensures the design will meet local needs and engender local community ownership in the open space.
23. This approach is supported by Sevington and Mersham Parish Council and by the Ward Member Cllr Gerald White.

Portfolio Holder's Views

24. "This report seeks to authorise the spending of Highways England funding agreed as compensation for Junction 10A works to considerably enhance facilities at the council owned Church Road, Sevington Play Area and Open Spaces and I fully support the recommendations".

Cllr Mike Bennett

Contact and Email

25. Amanda Scott, Play and Open Spaces Project Officer,
amanda.scott@ashford.gov.uk