

 REPORT TO EXECUTIVE			
PORTFOLIO AREA: ENVIRONMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT			
Date of Meeting:		1 September 2003	
Public			
Key Decision:	Yes	Recorded in Forward Plan:	Yes
Inside Policy Framework Yes			

Title: **RAFFLES VISION - OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

Report of: **Head of Economic and Community Development**

Report reference: **ECD.27/03**

Summary:

The report updates the Executive on the development of a service level agreement for the management and maintenance of open spaces and cleared sites at Raffles and outlines the options for maintenance to be considered as part of the budget process and negotiated with partners.

Recommendations:

The Executive is requested:

1. to agree in principle the proposals for a service level agreement between the City Council and CHA, subject to a final agreement , including financial commitment from all parties, being brought back to the Executive in December.
2. to give a view on the proposed options for maintenance standards and costings.

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ECD.27/03

RAFFLES VISION - OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1. At the Executive meeting on 3 March 2003, officers were instructed to commence negotiations with Carlisle Housing Association (CHA) and Lovells on a partnership agreement for the management and maintenance of public open space at Raffles. There are two elements; the management and maintenance of public open space, ie the Park, and the temporary maintenance of the sites where houses have been cleared. The first involves a long-term commitment whilst the second commitment reduces as houses are built. The purpose of this report is to endorse the framework proposals in principle, to present and recommend options for maintenance with costings, to enable negotiations to continue and a final decision to be made as part of the budget process.
2. The review of the in house maintenance contract and standards for the open spaces was initiated through the Raffles Vision, which includes proposals for the improvement of Heysham Park. The consultation undertaken on the Raffles Vision highlighted the need for environmental improvement on the estate, including the park, other open spaces and the cleared areas.
3. Although the proposals for the different sections of Heysham Park have undergone public consultation and have generally been well received, further consultation will be required once more detailed proposals are available. There will be a one off capital cost in undertaking the agreed improvement works and this will need to be reported once further details are known. External funding will also be sought wherever possible to assist with covering the costs. Revenue costs will be incurred annually, as now, for the maintenance of the areas of open space. The obligations to maintain the cleared areas will reduce over the 10 year life of the redevelopment agreement.
4. Enhanced maintenance standards of the park will contribute to the strategic objectives of the Vision. However the interim maintenance of the cleared areas is equally important, if not more important to the longer term success of the housing renewal and makes a significant contribution to the quality of the environment for local residents.
5. The options summarised below are for varying standards of maintenance of both Heysham Park (as improved), the other areas of open space across the estate and the cleared areas. At this stage, all costings have been broadly estimated. The increases are due to the additional areas to be maintained and the standards proposed. The variations are due largely to the different options for frequencies of grass cutting proposed. There is currently a revenue budget of £28,500 for this work.

Option A: Total Annual Cost £ 50,975

Service levels remain as they are but costs are increased by £22,475 to take account of the additional areas requiring maintenance.

Option B: Total Annual Cost £68,350

Increase the frequency of grass cutting to weekly in some sections of Heysham Park and a further section to be divided into two, one half being cut fortnightly and the other half being cut twice yearly. The open spaces across the estate will be cut on a weekly basis.

Option C: Total Annual Cost £ 60,550

Increase the frequency of grass cutting to weekly in some sections of Heysham Park. The open spaces across the estate will continue to be cut on a fortnightly basis. Taking a pragmatic approach, this option is recommended by officers.

1.6 Management Agreement

A maintenance contract already exists and was drawn up to govern the work of Commercial and Technical Services (then Carlisle Works). It is proposed that this document be retained, although retitled and updated, as the basic provisions in it remain valid and appropriate. It would be read alongside a specification, the wording of which will depend on the chosen option and the agreed designs for upgrading Heysham Park.

1.7 It is proposed that the City Council and Carlisle Housing Association sign up to an agreed standard of maintenance, agreed also with the local community through the Raffles Community Forum and with Lovells. The Council would be the lead body in the process. The maintenance agreement would be in the form of a service level agreement based on the maintenance contract and the agreed standards and would be delivered by Commercial and Technical Services. Delivery would be monitored by all partners, working together.

8. Maintenance costs would be divided between the partners. It may also be possible to attract external funding to assist with these costs. This is being explored further with the North West Development Agency and others and would enable the cost to the partners to be reduced.
9. An indication by the Executive of the likely financial commitment from the Council will enable negotiations with partners to continue. The Council's contribution can be discussed as part of the budget process so that by the end of the year, an agreement can be finalised with the other partners and brought back to the Executive in January.
10. This timetable would enable the SLA to be completed within this financial year. Reinstatement of the cleared areas has already commenced and the new standards would come into effect from April 2004. This maintenance commitment would reduce as new houses are constructed over the 10 year period. A programme of capital works to the park would start in 2004/05.

2. CONSULTATION

2.1 Consultation to Date – the proposals reflect the consultation undertaken throughout the development of the Raffles Vision. Information on the potential options was also presented to the meeting of the Raffles Community Forum on 12 August 2003. A discussion on whether the park should be fenced to keep out vehicles raised differing views. There was no overall preference expressed regarding frequency of grass cutting. The Forum wished to undertake a wider consultation of residents. This would be intended once detailed designs of the park are worked up. In the meantime the cost implications of fencing the park need to be borne in mind.

2.2 Consultation proposed. Once more details are available on the design of Heysham Park, further consultation will be undertaken.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is requested:

1. to agree in principle the proposals for a service level agreement between the City Council and CHA subject to a final agreement , including financial commitment from all parties, being brought back to the Executive in December
2. to give a view on the proposed options for maintenance standards and costings.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable negotiations to continue with CHA and others and to reach agreement of future standards of maintenance.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – The maintenance and the preparation of landscape designs will involve primarily staff from Commercial and Technical Services and Culture Leisure and Sport.
- Financial – The proposals need to be considered as part of the budget process.
 - Legal - It will be necessary in due course to draw up some detailed form of Agreement or protocol of understanding. This will make it clear what precisely is expected from each party by way of input into the maintenance and management proposals and each party therefore knows what it is agreeing to deliver.
- Corporate – Approach endorsed by CMT on 11 April.
- Risk Management – New arrangements are required following LSVT. The Council

also needs to protect its longer term interest in a successful housing renewal programme.

- Equality Issues – The proposed works have the potential to improve the quality of life for residents in a ward experiencing higher levels of deprivation than the majority of the district.
- Environmental – The proposals would significantly improve the quality of the local environment.
- Crime and Disorder – the improvements to Heysham Park can be used to ‘design out crime’.