

Extract from minutes of:-

PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE,

Thursday, 13th September, 2012

“Laganscape Partnership Scheme Project

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to update Members in respect of the Laganscape Partnership Scheme Project (LPSP) and seek Members approval to allocate human and financial resources in order to complete Council’s programme of activities within the scheme and fulfil its requirement to the programme.

LPSP is managed by Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) which is a partnership between the Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Lisburn City Council, Department of Culture Arts and Leisure and Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Historically the Council has provided funding to support LVRP over a number of years and, during this time the Council has benefitted from the positive impact of the work of LVRP.

In 2006 LVRP submitted a funding application to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), seeking funding in respect of the LPSP. The aim of the LPSP was to implement and manage a programme which included the following elements:

- interpretation development
- species survey and conservation
- habitat management and enhancement
- volunteer and community participation and
- built heritage and urban improvements.

In June 2007 LVRP received a letter of offer from HLF confirming that its funding application had been successful and a grant in the sum of £1,617,000, which represented 71% of the total eligible project costs, had been approved.

On 24 August 2007 Council signed a partnership agreement consenting to delivery of the LPSP in accordance with the LVRP funding application to HLF and the letter of offer issued by HLF. A copy of the partnership agreement is attached as Appendix 2.

The project was to be delivered over a five year period commencing in 2007 with capital projects being delivered in year 1 and projects aimed at engaging users, community groups and schools delivered throughout the duration of the

project. A list of the project partners together with their contribution to the project is attached as Appendix 3.

In 2007 the Council agreed to invest an in kind contribution to the project in the sum of £50,000 under the theme of habitat management and enhancement, in particular grassland and wetland management within Council sites.

Council's Corporate Plan identifies the importance of caring for Belfast's environment by creating a clean, green city now and for the future. The Parks and Leisure Departmental Plan supports the Council's objectives under the themes of environment and people and communities by maintaining, developing and protecting parks and open spaces as well as engaging with local people to create a wide range of community programmes. By participating in the LPSP, Parks and Leisure Department endorsed these aims and objectives through delivery of its programme themes under habitat management and enhancement.

2 Key Issues

To date Council has evidenced £4,554 of "in kind" contribution to the project and it is estimated that a further £2,500 in respect of works is in the process of being submitted to LPSP.

Given that Council agreed to a total in kind contribution in the sum of £50,000 (over the 5 years), a balance of £42,946 would technically still be outstanding.

LPSP has confirmed that the project will be extended to June 2013, which will enable Council officers' sufficient time to complete a proportion of works in respect of habitat management and enhancement within Council sites.

It is proposed to carry out grassland and wetland enhancement initiatives on Council sites within LVRP such as Lagan Meadows and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. Specific project proposals will be further developed and subject to Committee approval, an implementation plan will be devised for delivery during the period October 2012 to June 2013.

Council works closely with the LVRP (to which it makes a financial contribution on an annual basis) and officers have developed a strong working relationship over a period of time.

The Laganscape project is now in year 5 (final year). Throughout its lifespan there has been a range of project delays and staff / project management changes. Given that the Council's original commitment for 5 years is due to expire in November 2012, the question has now been raised as to BCC's ongoing level of contribution.

At this stage, there is no forward plan or budget beyond this year (and up until June 2013) to support this project. It is proposed that BCC commit to fulfilling an in-kind contribution of £10K for the 12-13 year and that any further, ongoing request would fall outside of the original agreement and would therefore need to be defined in a business case and submitted to the current Parks and Leisure Committee for review and approval in line with future planning / estimates cycles.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

As outlined above, it is proposed that £10K is contributed (by way of 'in-kind' contribution) to Laganscape in the current financial year – this can be provided for from the Parks area south/west budget.

Human Resources

Officer time will be required for planning, coordinating and delivering project activities.

Asset and Other Implications

The project activities will enhance a number of Council parks and ongoing maintenance will need to be incorporated into the relevant parks management plans.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

There are no known associated equality considerations associated with this project.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- Note the contents of this update report;
- Agree that a contribution of £10K 'in-kind' be made to the project for this final year of the original agreement in order to fulfil our obligation to the programme;
- Agree that any further request for financial or 'in-kind' support would be subject to a more detailed proposal from Laganscape being submitted to the Parks and Leisure Committee for review and agreement in line with current planning and estimates processes."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.