

Report to: Cabinet
Council

Date of Meeting: 14th February 2013
28th February 2013

Subject: Red Rose Park

Report of: Director of Built Environment

Wards Affected: Ravenmeols

Is this a Key Decision? Yes

Is it included in the Forward Plan? Yes

Exempt/Confidential No.

Purpose/Summary

To seek approval to a project to refurbish existing pitches and to provide new pitches within the existing Gypsy & Traveller site at Red Rose Park, Broad Lane, Formby.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that:

- i) Cabinet accepts the grant offer of £308,020 made under the Homes and Communities Agency's Gypsy and Traveller fund to refurbish the existing pitches and provide four new pitches within the existing site boundary;
- ii) Cabinet authorises the Director of Built Environment to invite tenders for a contractor to carry out the works at Red Rose Park as set out in the report, subject to the necessary planning permission being granted for the works;
- iii) Cabinet authorises the Director of Built Environment to secure "Investment Partner" status with the Homes and Communities Agency;
- iv) Council approves the inclusion of the total scheme cost of £323,020 within the Capital programme in 2013/14 to be funded by grant (£308,020) and a revenue contribution of £15,000 as per the report.

How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?

	<u>Corporate Objective</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community	X		
2	Jobs and Prosperity	X		
3	Environmental Sustainability	X		
4	Health and Well-Being	X		
5	Children and Young People	X		
6	Creating Safe Communities	X		
7	Creating Inclusive Communities	X		
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy	X		

Reasons for the Recommendation:

The project to refurbish the existing pitches and provide new pitches at the site is currently not part of the approved Capital Programme.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) **Revenue Costs:** The match funding of £15,000 can be accommodated within the existing revenue budget, through savings in repair and maintenance costs and additional rental income generated by the project.

(B) **Capital Costs:** The Council will administer grant funding of £308,020 and match funding of £15,000 to cover the capital cost of this project.

(C) Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Legal: Failure to provide sufficient and/or high quality authorised traveller pitches would inevitably lead to an increase in unauthorised illegal encampments. Such incidents are dealt with by officers through existing legislation and where it is necessary to take such action the cost of doing so is borne from the Housing Service budget.						
Human Resources: Delivery of this work will be managed by the existing Housing Investment Team and therefore there are no additional human resources required as a consequence of this expenditure.						
<p>Equality</p> <table> <tr> <td>1. No Equality Implication</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Impact on Service Delivery:

This will ensure that the Council can continue to deliver a high quality authorised traveller pitch service in the borough.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Head of Corporate Finance (FD1384/13) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

The Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD2068) has been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report

Are there any other options available for consideration?

The offer of grant could be rejected, and as there is no allocated funding for the purpose, the existing pitches could not be ungraded and no additional capacity can be added to the site. The condition of the existing accommodation is particularly poor and without improvements necessary to address these issues a question is raised about whether the Council wish to continue providing sub-standard accommodation of this sort. Closure of Red Rose Park is likely to result in an increase in illegal encampments in the borough and leave 16 families without accommodation, most of who have resided at the site for many years

Implementation Date for the Decision

Upon the expiry of the “call-in” period following the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer: Lee Payne

Tel: 0151 934 4842

Email: lee.payne@sefton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

None

1.0 BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. Red Rose Park Traveller site in Formby has provided authorised Traveller accommodation in the borough since 1988.
- 1.2. The site currently comprises 16 standard pitches utilising 6 existing utility blocks which house washing and cleaning facilities. A small playground is also provided within the boundary of the site.
- 1.3. The traveller community on the site is very settled and there is little turnover of residents. Over recent years these families have grown putting increased pressure on existing facilities at the site.
- 1.4. The existing facilities are no longer fit for purpose, particularly the hot water systems contained within the utility blocks which are subject to frequent breakdowns, requiring regular reactive repair orders which are costly to the Council and inconvenient for residents. A condition survey carried out of the site also identified the play equipment in the playground area to be dangerous and it was therefore subsequently closed to residents.
- 1.5. In 2008, Sefton, Liverpool, Knowsley and Wirral Councils jointly commissioned an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation provision across the Merseyside area. This report identified a shortage of this type of accommodation across the City Region and recommended that Sefton provide an additional 16 pitches by 2016.
- 1.6. During the summer of 2012 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) announced a further round of Gypsy and Traveller Funding, primarily intended to provide new traveller accommodation.
- 1.7. Officers held discussions with the HCA with a view to gaining access to this funding. A funding proposal was submitted in September 2012 and funding was approved in December.
- 1.8. In order to access the funding the Council must secure 'Investment Partner' status with the HCA by way of a short application process.

2.0 PROJECT PROPOSAL:

- 2.1. The work necessary to refurbish the existing pitches and utility blocks in order to bring them up to a decent standard has been costed at £76,072.50.
- 2.2. In addition to refurbishing the existing pitches proposals have also been put forward to provide 4 new family pitches on land within the confines of the site. These pitches would primarily accommodate the expanding family units who have been resident on the site for a number of years. The new pitches will be served by 2 new utility blocks providing efficient hot water systems for washing and cleaning.
- 2.3. A small play area with new play equipment will also be provided within the bounds of the existing site. The cost of providing this new accommodation is £246,947.85, giving a total project cost including all fees of £323,020.

- 2.4 Grant of £308,020 has been offered, leaving a £15,000 match funding requirement.
- 2.5 The refurbishment of the current pitches will see the equipment that is no longer fit for purpose replaced with new and much more reliable equipment, notably the hot water heaters in the utility blocks, which are used by residents for washing and cleaning. For the first 12 months this equipment will be covered by warranties provided by the manufacturer, and thereafter it is anticipated that repair and maintenance costs for the site will reduce dramatically.
- 2.6 Once completed it is estimated that the annual rental income from the additional 4 family pitches will be £14,872, increasing the total potential income from the site to £68,622 (assuming 100% occupancy and rental collection).
- 2.7 Undertaking this project will therefore reduce revenue expenditure and increase revenue income from the site. It is proposed that these projected savings are used to provide the £15,000 match funding for this scheme in 2013/14.
- 2.8 Consultation has been carried out with residents of Red Rose Park about this proposal, and residents are in favour of it. The site is very isolated with only one residential property in the vicinity of the site. This resident has been made aware of the proposal and as the new pitches will require Planning Consent further community consultation will take place on this proposal as part of the planning process.
- 2.9 Should this proposal be approved by member work will commence on the project in March with a view to completing it by late 2013.