



Report to: Cleaner Safer Greener
Decision Date: 22 March 2023
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Roger Jackson
Director Lead: Matthew Finch, Director of Communities & Environment
Lead Officer: Ben Stacey, Street Scene Manager

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Non-key decision
Report Title	Potential for improvements in Sherwood Avenue Park
Purpose of Report	To put forward a proposal for consideration that could lead to significant investment and improvement in Sherwood Avenue Park in Newark
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Portfolio Holder notes and supports the development of the potential scheme• Support a period of public consultation, to better define the scope and design of any development• Agree that the NSDC share of any overage from the sale of the former London Road toilets is committed to this scheme, together with the Section 106 monies as set out• Support a bid to the Rural Shared Prosperity Fund in line with the funding cocktail set out in the accompanying exempt report• Subject to the above, a report is brought back to Cabinet in due course to formally endorse the scheme or otherwise.
Alternative Options Considered	Given the age of the park, its prominence in the town centre and the links to the Council's Community Plan objectives, doing nothing is not deemed to be a viable alternative. Scope does exist to reduce the scope of any intervention, but the strategy is based on scaling back if necessary, rather than from desirability.
Reason for Recommendation	The recommendations align with the Community Plan objectives in relation to health and wellbeing and the

	environment and in response to resident feedback as evidenced through the latest resident survey, which placed growing emphasis on parks and play areas. It is also in line with the strategy for increased town centre living.
Decision Taken	Agreed as per the recommendation.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Newark and Sherwood District Council has four award-winning Green Flag parks in its ownership – Sconce and Devon Park and the Castle Grounds in Newark, Sherwood Heath at Ollerton and Vicar Water in Clipstone.
- 1.2 In addition, the Council has a total of 30 play parks that it owns and maintains across the district, including some at the award-winning parks above, some in our local communities and some on the housing revenue account land.
- 1.3 Over recent times, the Council has been undertaking some improvement works at these play parks to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This has recently included a Cabinet decision to invest £350,000 in improving ten sites across Newark and Sherwood, including the development of a new fitness zone and Castle-style play park at Sconce and Devon Park in Newark.

Sherwood Avenue Park

- 1.4 Sherwood Avenue Park is owned by Newark Town Council, following the devolution agreement between the Town and District Councils. However, it continues to be maintained by the District Council as part of a service level agreement.
- 1.5 The park is in a prominent town centre location but is beginning to look tired. It features a multi-use games area in a sunken part of the park which once housed the town's former lido. Additionally, there is a skate park at the site, which is now in need of regular repair. A few years back, the park lost its status as a Green Flag Park.
- 1.6 In December, the District Council was approached by the Town with a view to helping the Town Council develop new plans for the park alongside a possible funding bid to third party organisations. This way of working in collaboration is formalised in an agreement signed by both parties at the time of the devolution agreement and NSDC therefore agreed to support.
- 1.7 In the view of officers, there are significant opportunities presented by Sherwood Avenue Park. The district already boasts four green flag parks and this could be another. It is in a town centre location where play space is at a premium and the Council recently committed to significant investment in play parks in its ownership, following the resident survey which showed how the importance of parks and play spaces has grown over recent times. In addition, there is an increasing need to think about the changing role of town centres and the role new housing can play in their regeneration. Easy town centre access to green spaces align with that strategy.

- 1.8 However, in order to maximise the potential, there is need to re-think the park in its widest sense, not least because of its age, but because many of its facilities, such as the skatepark, are available at the YMCA but at a cost to the user. There is also a need for the facilities to align with the changing role of town centres. At the current time, there is the ability to put together a significant funding cocktail to bring the scheme to fruition at limited cost to Newark and Sherwood District Council.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

Vision and planning

- 2.1 In order to develop a new vision for the park, it is proposed that the Town and District Councils enter into a period of formal consultation on the park. This is envisaged to include both existing users of the park, as well as those who don't currently visit to understand why they don't and what might entice them to do so in the future.
- 2.2 The culmination of this consultation period will be an open event in the park in late May, which will be attended by Extreme Wheels, who will put on BMX and skateboarding exhibitions as well as bringing smaller scale machines for visitors to try free of charge.
- 2.3 Officers will be on hand to ask attendees what they think of the park and how they would like to see it developed into the future. Other consultation activity will take place with key stakeholders and residents in the vicinity to gain their views on the future of the site. This feedback will then be turned into concept design with the Town Council agreeing to pick up the cost of this feasibility work.
- 2.4 An indicative cost plan at this stage for a re-developed Sherwood Avenue Park has been forecast, with the feasibility in addition to that sum and to be financed by the Town Council.

Potential Funding Cocktail

- 2.5 Newark Town Council is considering a sale of the former toilet block and snack bar on London Road. As this was an asset devolved to the Town Council through the devolution agreement with NSDC, the district is due an overage of 50% of any sale price. The Town Council has indicated that their 50% would go to Sherwood Avenue and that is an option open to NSDC.
- 2.6 In addition to the potential money above, the Council is due to receive in excess of £170,000 in Section 106 monies from the Arkwood Development at Lord Hawke Way in Newark. A sum of £80,671.62p will go to capital investment in play park equipment at either Sherwood Avenue or Cleveland Square, with a further £89,723.10 to go the maintenance of the same.
- 2.7 An argument could be made that the second sum could go to the capital investment as this is both a priority and would negate the need for substantial on-going maintenance as this is provided by NSDC under the SLA and from warranties on any new equipment. If Arkwood were to agree, the total contribution of the Section 106 would be £170,394.72.

- 2.8 The argument to direct the money to Sherwood Avenue is strengthened by the fact that Cleveland Square has been identified for improvements through the Council's play park investment programme. Cleveland Square is one of two HRA parks to benefit from £100,000 of funding.
- 2.9 Finally, whilst the Council has not bid against the Shared Prosperity Fund in this round for the scheme, the plan is that, post feasibility, we would look to bid for capital match funding against all the elements above from the Rural Shared Prosperity Fund later in the year.
- 2.10 If successful and subject to the sale of the London Road toilet block at the estimated sale price, an agreement from NSDC to direct its contribution to Sherwood Avenue and agreement to vary the Section 106 from Arkwood, the cost of funding the scheme would be met.
- 2.11 Any investment in Sherwood Avenue would be in addition to the £350,000 play park improvement programme across 10 sites in Newark and Sherwood.
- 2.12 The Council's latest resident survey showed the increased emphasis that residents are placing on parks and open spaces post pandemic and in the midst of the cost of living challenge and the need to re-think and regenerate town centres.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, I have considered the following implications: Equality and Diversity, Financial, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate I have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment below where appropriate.

3.1 Equalities Implications

During the planning of any potential scheme full consultation will take place with user groups where appropriate and residents and consideration will be given to suitability of inclusive play equipment to enable play for all. The police will also be a key consultee to try to mitigate ASB and crime.

4.0 Financial Implications (FIN22-23/2152)

- 4.1 If the scheme is supported, the financial implications of such will need to be fully reviewed following the public consultation and design of the development and an appropriate budget would need to be added the Capital Programme to pass the money detailed in paragraph 2.5 to 2.7, to Newark Town Council under a Section 106 Side Agreement.
- 4.2 The District Council maintain the site for the Town Council under an Service Level Agreement. The equipment would be covered by warranties, but it should be noted that if the S106 money for maintenance is transferred to Capital, the Town Council will need to be satisfied that for the maintenance period (15-20 years) it is affordable to maintain the park without the maintenance money.

- 4.3 50% of the S106 receipts described in paragraph 2.6 have been received to date and the amounts reflect increases in Building Cost Information Service (BCIS). Once the trigger is reached for the second half of the receipts, these will also be subject to increases in BCIS and that rate will depend on when the trigger is reached. Therefore, the S106 monies available will be in excess of £170,394.72.

Background Papers and Published Documents