

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Gedling Country Park update

Date: 12th July 2012

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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Cabinet on the progress made to date on the delivery of the Gedling Country Park on Gedling Tip, Arnold, and to seek approval to carry out site survey work in advance of potential site acquisition.

2. Background

- 2.1 It has been an ambition of the Borough Council for some time to progress the development of the Gedling Country Park. For some time this was delayed pending the outcome of extensive negotiations, modelling and investigations into the viability of the adjoining former Gedling Colliery site for the re-development for housing and employment uses.
- 2.2 An opportunity has been presented to the Council from UK Coal to bring forward the development of the Gedling Country Park in the immediate future.

3. Update

- 3.1 Officers have been working very closely with the owners of the site, UK Coal and have been able to convince them of the strategic importance of the Country Park. As a result of this, the UK Coal Board has agreed, in principle, to transfer the ownership of the majority of their land allocated for open space to the Borough Council to progress the development of a Country Park.

- 3.2 Officers have also been negotiating with the Homes and Community Agency, who own the land to the South of the site, about access from Arnold Lane. These discussions are on-going.
- 3.3 The next steps will be to undertake a variety of survey work to assess the condition of the land, establish its value and to be able to plan the Country Park layout and to risk assess the impact of accepting the land transfer.

This work will also support any future planning application for the change of use of the site and help identify any relevant infrastructure work that may be required to progress the site for use as a Country Park. These surveys will include;

- Land searches
- Methane and gas venting
- Soil and ground contamination
- Topographical and geotechnical
- The structural integrity of the former railway tunnel
- Biodiversity (including Bats)
- Drainage
- Traffic impact Assessment
- Tree Survey
- Flood Risk Assessment

The initial costs for phase 1 preliminary surveys are estimated to be around £12 000. Dependent on the outcome of these, further specific phase 2 surveys may be required, which have been estimated at up to a maximum of £68 000 with a realistic estimate spend of £35 000. These estimates do not include any provision for remedial works, the extent of which could be highlighted by the phase 2 surveys.

4. Budget and Resource Implications

- 4.1 There are several sources of funding which might be brought together to fund a capital project on site i.e;
- Section 106 contributions for public open space from housing development in the area
 - Public Realms Work funding via Gedling Homes
 - Growth Point Funding – Bid already submitted and now awaiting final approval by the Joint Planning Advisory Board.

The first two of these are likely to be available in 2013/14, whilst the Growth Point Funding, if approved, would need to be committed in 2012/13.

- 4.2 The above demonstrates the potential financial viability of a Capital Scheme on the site which could exceed £1million; this would be subject to a further report and these costs would include any expenditure on site survey, acquisition and scheme planning.
- 4.3 However budgets do not exist for the initial survey works that would be required before land acquisition, and if these determine the land transfer is not viable then this would be a revenue charge to the general fund. In order therefore to be certain of funding for the Survey Works Members are requested to approve the Virement of up to £47 000 from reserves in order for the scheme to progress. Sufficient funds exist in either our Community Reserve and/or Risk Management Fund if required.
- 4.4 If additional budget provision is required for further technical surveys or remediation works, this will be reported back to Cabinet for approval.

5. Recommendation

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the good progress made on the project to date; and
- 2) Approves revenue expenditure virement of up to £47 000 from reserves if required in respect of the pre-transfer surveys and land acquisition.