

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/2016 REPORT NO.**

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN UNDER  
DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

**PORTFOLIO DECISION OF:**  
Cabinet Member for Environment

**REPORT OF:**  
Director – Regeneration &  
Environment

<b>Agenda – Part: 1</b>	<b>KD Num: KD 4123</b>
<b>Subject:</b>  <b>Firs Farm Wetlands</b>	
<b>Wards: Bush Hill Park</b>	

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Enfield, in partnership with Defra, Environment Agency, Thames 21 and the Greater London Authority, proposes to design and construct a wetland area in Firs Farm Playing Fields. This report seeks approval for the £657k programme of works with these agencies, plus an already approved contribution of £55k from the Council's 2015/16 Watercourses Borough Capital funding.
- 1.2 The development of the proposal has received support and active participation from the Friends of Firs Farm. This scheme received over 2100 votes in a GLA-led London wide competition, the largest of all the short-listed projects.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To approve the creation of the wetlands in Firs Farm Playing Fields and accept £657k of funding through partnership working with various interested parties.
- 2.2 To place orders through any of the Council's existing relevant term contracts or to invite and evaluate tenders/quotations and, where suitable tenders/quotations are received, to award contracts for the works to create the wetlands as appropriate.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Firs Farm is a large open space (area 21.3Ha) bordering Edmonton and Winchmore Hill between Firs Lane and the A10. It contains 12 football pitches and a rugby pitch, which are well used but of limited interest for the rest of the local community. The proposed works will not affect the existing sports facilities
- 3.2 Works were carried out in 2014/15, jointly funded by the Borough Capital programme and the Environment Agency, to de-culvert 500m of the Moore Brook which passes through the site to create an interesting and varied landscape. The spoil from this work was used on site to create an embankment to improve the flood resilience of properties bordering the fields downstream, an action identified from the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP).
- 3.3 At Firs Farm, the recent de-culverting works and planned future works have created a significant level of interest – this has encouraged the formation of a new Friends Group. The Council and newly formed Friends held an event at Firs Farm in September 2014 which was attended by over 40 people. The vast majority were very keen to see proposals that enhance the natural aspects of the park and offer an alternative point of interest to the existing sports facilities.
- 3.4 The project is split into five phases:
- Phase 1 – excavation of watercourse (completed in September 2014)
  - Phase 2 – civils works including excavation to create wetland basins
  - Phase 3 – planting to wetlands and other areas
  - Phase 4 – completion of civils works to wetlands (weirs, outfalls, etc) and footpath-cycleway facilities
  - Phase 5 – connection of Moore Brook southern branch to wetlands (flood defence funding, includes 100m open watercourse and 400m piped)
- 3.5 The next phases (2 to 5) of the work at Firs Farm will create a wetlands at the upstream end of the park adjacent to Firs Lane and improved access between Firs Lane and the A10. The project will create a major new wetland habitat that can store up to 30,000 cubic metres of flood water. This will reduce flood risk to over 100 residential properties and the A10 trunk road. The park's ecology will be improved with a range of native plants.
- 3.6 This proposal has been the subject of a public consultation exercise in co-operation with the Friends of Firs Farm. Partial funding has been obtained through the London Mayor's Big

Green Fund, which was a London-wide project to improve local green spaces across London. The seven shortlisted projects were subject to public consultation and vote, with Firs Farm receiving the most votes and one of only two sites to be awarded the maximum grant of £175,000. The project will also bring other benefits like better flood management, opportunities for recreation and new walking and cycling routes.

- 3.7 The funding for the Firs Farm Wetlands and flood storage area is summarised as follows:
- Enfield Council 2014/15 capital programme – £80k (already spent)
  - Thames Water Community Investment Fund – £70k
  - Environment Agency SuDS – £45k
  - Enfield Council 2015/16 capital programme – £55k
  - Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA – Defra funding administered by the Environment Agency and topped up by the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee) – £367k (estimate)
  - GLA Big Green Fund – £175k
- 3.8 Total sum for design and construction works is £792k (£712k in 2015/16).
- 3.9 This project forms part of an overall measure to address flood risk and water quality management in this catchment. The water from Firs Farm flows towards Pymmes Park Lake, which has suffered from urban pollution problems for many years. Cleaning the water using wetlands at Firs Farm will help to improve the water in Pymmes Park Lake in addition to the other benefits delivered by the scheme.
- 3.10 Building on Thames21's successful Salmons Brook Healthy River Challenge work, it has recently been agreed that Thames21 will extend their education-based Fixing Broken Rivers project into schools in the vicinity of Firs Farm. This project aims to educate young people about urban watercourses, the pressures they face and the many ways people can help to improve them. Thames21 will arrange school visits to Firs Farm during and after construction of the wetlands.
- 3.11 A planning application for the Firs Farm Wetlands was submitted in March 2015. Works are planned for Summer 2015.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Do nothing: This scheme is part of series of improvements to reduce risk of flooding to Edmonton and will contribute to peak flow reduction at Pymmes Park. To do nothing will lose an opportunity to attract significant funding to the borough, to improve the environment and access to Firs Park as well as to reduce flood risk to adjacent properties and those downstream. It will also lose an opportunity to comply with one of the actions identified in the SWMP.

#### **5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Improvements to the Environment through de-culverting a watercourse (already done) and creation of a significant wetland with attendant creation of habitat and biodiversity improvements.
- 5.2 Improved utilisation of open space by providing an open watercourse and wildlife facilities available to local schools and users of the park.
- 5.3 Improved green links between communities by providing a combined cycle way and footpath linking the A10 to Firs Lane. This route links with the rest of Enfield's network of cycle paths – in particular the A10 subway at Deansway providing safe access to Edmonton.
- 5.4 Improved flood protection through the creation of a significant flood storage facility which will reduce the risk of flooding downstream. This complies with the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) recommendation to reduce flood risk in this area.
- 5.5 Investment of £135k through the Borough Capital funding over 2014-16 has attracted funding to the borough through grants from the GLA (£175k), EA (£45k), TWUL (£70k) and FDGiA (estimated at £367k), a total of £657k investment in the borough from external sources.

#### **6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES, AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

##### **6.1 Financial Implications**

- 6.1.1 The overall total cost of the Firs Farm Wetlands and flood storage area (design and construction works) is £792,000 (£80,000 spent 2014/15 and the 2015/16 estimated cost is £712,000), funded from internal and external sources, through partnership working with various interested parties (see the table below).

## **6.2 Legal Implications**

- 6.2.1 The Council has the general power of competence pursuant to s.1 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do provided it is not prohibited by legislation and subject to Public Law principles. The proposals set out in this report are consistent with this power.
- 6.2.2 Any contracts awarded in respect of the creation of the wetlands must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) as appropriate. Where an existing term contract is utilised, the Council must comply with the terms and conditions of that contract in respect of placing orders.
- 6.2.3 The Council must comply with its obligations with regards to obtaining best value under the Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act 1999.
- 6.2.4 All legal agreements arising from the matters described in this report must be approved by the Assistant Director of Legal Services, where they are over £75,000 (services/supplies) and £100,000 (works) respectively.
- 6.2.5 The Council must comply with any grant conditions imposed by the various organisations in return for providing funding for the creation of the wetlands.

## **6.3 Property Implications**

- 6.3.1 When the contract for the works has been awarded, if the contractor needs to set up a secure compound for plant and equipment and portacabins during the construction programme, it is recommended that as the compound will be on Council land / Public Open Space, the parties should enter into a licence.
- 6.3.2 In essence, the licence would cover such matters as the duration of the works, payment for the use of any utilities and any other outgoings and the making good of the land to the Council's satisfaction, after the completion of the works.

## **7. KEY RISKS**

- 7.1 The following key risks relate to not implementing the project:
- Loss of opportunity to reduce flood risk downstream and compliance with a SWMP action
  - Loss of attraction of £657k funding to borough
  - Loss of opportunity to increase biodiversity and wildlife habitat

<b><u>Funding Stream</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated Cost/Funding</u></b>
Enfield Council 2014/15 capital programme – £80k (already spent)	£80,000
<b>Internal/Enfield Council Funded 14/15 Total Actual Expenditure</b>	<b>£80,000</b>
Enfield Council 2015/16 capital programme – £55k	£55,000
<b>Internal/Enfield Council Funded 15/16 Total Estimated Cost</b>	<b>£55,000</b>
Thames Water Community Investment Fund – £70k	£70,000
Environment Agency SuDS – £45k	£45,000
Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA – Defra funding administered by the Environment Agency and topped up by the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee) – £367k (estimate)	£367,000
GLA Big Green Fund – £175k	£175,000
<b>External Grants Funded 15/16 Total Estimated Cost</b>	<b>£657,000</b>
<b>15/16 Total Estimated Cost</b>	<b>£712,000</b>
<b>Over All Grand Total Design and Construction Works</b>	<b>£792,000</b>

6.1.2 £657,000 of the total cost in 2015/16 is funded from external grants; hence this estimated cost will not fall on Enfield Council's financial resources.

6.1.3 Enfield Council should obtain confirmation documents from the grant providers and adhere to the grant conditions as stated in the grant application and acceptance documents from the relevant partners. Failure to do so may result in a loss of grant/s, which will have a direct impact on the Council's financial resources.

6.1.4 Costs incurred on this project will be recorded on SAP and should be monitored against approved spending profiles (grant conditions) and grant claims should be submitted to the relevant partners as soon as possible; ensuring that Enfield Council benefits from prompt reimbursement of any expenditure.



- Loss of enthusiastic cooperation with the Friends of Firs Farm local residents group
  - Loss of improved access across Firs Farm
- 7.2 Loss of a funding stream could be accommodated by re-structuring the scheme.

## **8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

### **8.1 Fairness for All**

- 8.1.1 The proposal will dramatically improve site accessibility for all users with particular benefit being for disabled users, cyclists and push chair users.
- 8.1.2 Currently the site suffers from poor entry points and those that do exist have poor quality paths or are simply muddy/rutted routes of desire. The inclusive designs will significantly improve access to the site for wheelchair and push buggy users with the new paths being fully DDA compliant.

### **8.2 Growth and Sustainability**

The project manages flood risk in a sustainable way by using natural processes and having a positive impact on the environment through the restoration of a natural watercourse and creating wetlands. It also improves adaption to possible impacts of climate change.

### **8.3 Strong Communities**

The development of the Friends of Firs Farm group and outstanding response to GLA survey demonstrates the local interest and enthusiasm for this scheme. Creating opportunities for festivals and open days to encourage a sense of place, ownership and shared local identity enhances strong communities. Enfield Council and Thames21 will engage with the public, organise events and encourage voluntary conservation work, and provide interpretation signage.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

Corporate advice has been sought in regard to equalities and an agreement has been reached that an equalities impact assessment is neither relevant nor proportionate for the approval of this report to access grant funding. However an EQIA will be undertaken and will inform the design and access for the proposed wetland area.

## **10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The following Key Performance Indicators have been agreed with one of the principal partners (Thames Water) and will be used to measure the success of the project:
- Creation of a wetlands area at Firs Farm Playing Fields with improved pedestrian access from Firs Lane
  - Communication – positive press coverage and accreditation in industry media, a total of 3 articles sent to separate publications or blogs
  - Education – provide ‘Fixing Broken Rivers’ workshops at nearby schools and arrange at least 6 school visits
  - Provide 3 organised tours to demonstrate wetlands system to local residents and members of Friends of Firs Farm
  - Improvement in understanding of key messages around urban water quality issues and changes in behaviour
  - Hold an opening event in Summer 2016 with Friends of Firs Farm, local residents, schools and project partners
- 10.2 Performance will be monitored through quarterly reporting to Thames Water and also to the Greater London Authority.

## **11. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The wetlands have been designed in accordance with the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015, and industry good-practice standards, to be safe for members of the public. For example, open water features are surrounded by vegetated margins and slopes are designed to be shallow to reduce the risk of accidental entry into the water.
- 11.2 The flood storage area has been designed in accordance with recommendations made by a Reservoir Engineer who is a member of the Environment Agency’s all reservoirs panel list.
- 11.3 As the flood storage area reduces flood risk to over 100 residential properties, the scheme will have a significant positive impact on health and safety during flood events.

## **12. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 Improved access to open space, the wetlands encourage increased physical activity including walking, cycling and volunteer work.
- 12.2 The wetlands treat water and reduce pollution discharging to Pymmes Park Lake, reducing the likelihood and possible impact of future pollution incidents.

### **Background Papers**

None.