

To: City Executive Board

Date: 30th June 2010

Item No: 12

Report of: Head of City Leisure & Parks

Title of Report: To award a contract to construct an adventure play area and conduct improvement works at the Barton Neighbourhood Centre

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To grant project approval and delegated powers to the Executive Director of City Services to award a contract to construct an adventure play area at Barton. Funding for the project is secured by way of a grant of £1M from Play England.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Mark Lygo

Report approved by:

Finance: Gillian Chandler

Legal: Lindsay Cane

Policy Framework:

- Tackle inequalities and support communities
- Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life
- Reduce crime and anti social behaviour

Recommendation(s):

- 1) To grant project approval for the procurement of contractors to construct a play facility at Barton and to undertake works at the Barton Neighbourhood Centre.
- 2) To delegate, to the Executive Director of City Services the authority to award the external and internal works contracts and progress works within the given budget.
- 3) That the works contract is only awarded if written confirmation from the funding body has been received confirming that there will be no attempt to claw back the grant allocation.

1. Introduction & Background

- 1.1 The City Council is currently progressing a £2.5M play area refurbishment programme which is detailed in the City's Corporate Plan, the need for the programme was detailed in the 2005 Green Spaces Strategy. In May 2009 the City Council commissioned Ground Work Thames Valley (GTV) to project manage this three year programme.
- 1.2 The city's play programme is running in tandem with a County Council pathfinder programme. As part of the pathfinder programme the county has been awarded £2.6M by Play England to deliver the previous government's £235M investment in play to transform local areas into innovative and adventurous play spaces. This programme is a major part of the national Play Strategy, launched in April 2008. As the City Council had already commissioned GTV, an environmental and community regeneration charity to manage its play project, city officers suggested that Play Barton was managed in the same way.
- 1.3 The county pathfinder monies were split with £1.3M of the monies being used for playbuilder grants. The city achieved two financial awards in the first year (2008) totalling £77,000, disappointingly no awards were achieved in 2009 and in the final year (2010) the city has just attained £188,000 of funding. While some awards have been to community associations, the majority of the city funding has been used to support the wider play area refurbishment programme. The remaining £1.3M from the £2.6M play pathfinder grant has been designated to support and develop play provision across the county and build an adventure play area in Barton. This grant for Play Barton is made up of £800,000 capital and £200,000 of revenue (only the capital element transfers to the City).
- 1.4 Barton was chosen due to suitability of the land behind the Neighbourhood Centre, the proximity to the Neighbourhood Centre, which is run by a well organised neighbourhood association and the health and learning inequalities prevalent in this area, supporting the wider regeneration of Barton. The land, shown in appendix one, is designated as public open space and has special ecological qualities such as nesting kingfishers. The majority of the site is also within the flood plain and as such the Environment Agency has been involved in agreeing the site designs.
- 1.5 The adventure play area will provide an environment for children to enjoy a rich play experience, building on the local ecology and will also offer volunteering and training opportunities. A local management committee, the Barton Children's Project (BCP), has been established to take ownership of the play area and they will be supported over the next year to create a strong, capable organisation to deliver a sustainable project.
- 1.6 The play pathfinder initiative recognises the importance of play for a child's physical, social and emotional development. The deterioration in children and young people's health in recent years is well documented. In 2007 a United Nations report ranked Britain as having the worst outcomes for children's health and wellbeing out of 21 developed countries.

- 1.7 The majority of the 30 national pathfinder authorities are grappling with the challenge of the revenue funding having to be spent by March 2011. A traditional adventure play area incorporates indoor play and usually requires staff to operate. The Barton project, however, has recognised the increasingly challenging financial climate and strived for a sustainable solution, key actions taken to enable this to be achieved include;
 - 1.7.1 At the concept stage the decision was taken not to fence off the site so a large part of it can operate as an unstaffed, open access, play area. The site, particularly the brook, has traditionally been used by local children for informal play and by people walking dogs. This and the fact that the project is aimed at older children aged eight to 13, means that formal separation of children and dogs by fencing is not deemed desirable or necessary
 - 1.7.2 The establishment of the Barton Children's Project, which has been set up to own the project and oversee its operation; this will include seeking external funding to employ play workers to maximise the potential use of the site. Revenue has been spent to employ a funding officer to support GTV's project manager. Funding from the grant has been set aside to enable the trust to have a minimum of £20,000 enabling funds to support use of the site and cover any future costs.
 - 1.7.3 The option of creating a new indoor space has evolved into sharing an underused sports hall in the Barton Neighbourhood Centre. This will enable circa £200,000 of much needed improvement work to be made to this space and should increase the usage of traditional sports hall bookings alongside improving the City Council owned Neighbourhood Centre.
 - 1.7.4 The Milton Keynes Play Association won a tender to provide play workers to support the creation of the site; however, only one full time and one part time of the three full time equivalent posts planned were filled. Work is now underway to divert the remaining funding from these two posts into a budget that would be used to enable the creation of a part time post, ideally over four years, to offer a medium term resource to support the project. Future funding bids may be made to employ play workers to maximise the sites potential and to facilitate specific sessions and to build up a fund to support future maintenance and replacement of equipment.
 - 1.7.5 While the conditions of the grant award recognise that staffing is not essential, they do stipulate a level of indoor space. Following a series of meetings we attained written confirmation from Play England that they recognise the work we are doing to enable this and support our approach. We have made clear to Play England that if we progress the scheme within the tight timescales and are unable to achieve an indoor space, that they will not attempt to claw back any funds in the future.
 - 1.7.6 Landscaping costs can be carried over from the capital allowance for the initial two years. The parks team maintain the current site, but due to the increased level of works required for the play areas there will be increased costs of circa £7k-£10k, which has been identified within the parks budgets. These monies have been identified within the parks landscaping budgets, yet the intention is that the BCP will secure external funding to cover these costs.

We will also be purchasing equipment such as spare parts and a new mower out of the capital grant to further reduce these costs.

2. Tender for works

2.1 An advertisement for the external works will be placed in the South East Business Portal and trade press to advertise the tender opportunity. The planned improvements to the Neighbourhood Centre will be advertised later in the year using the same process. Tender specifications for the works will be prepared by the quantity surveyor for the project.

2.2 A tender specification will be prepared by the landscape architect who will specify the scope and quality of work to be undertaken. A quantity surveyor will assess the tender responses checking their validity and compliance with the invitation. Tenderers will be selected following pre qualification criteria being completed and assessed by the GTV project manager, the projects quantity surveyor and city parks and procurement employees.

3. Other Options

3.1 The constitution and procurement strategy advises that the City Executive Board considers what other options are available before giving major project approval and awarding a contract over 100K. These are detailed below.

3.2 Do not award a contract

Not proceeding with the tender of this work would jeopardise the completion of the project on time which would mean the monies would not be spent by the March 2011 deadline.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The City has a partnership agreement with the county to deliver the project by 31st March 2011. The city in turn extended their contract with GTV to deliver the project on time and on budget, as such mitigating the risk of overspends as these transfer to GTV.

4.2 The total grant to the City of £800,000 capital and £200,000 revenue was paid from the DCFS (department of children families and schools) to Oxfordshire County Council, for onward payment to the City. £454,000 was been received, leaving £346,000 which is now available for the City to invoice the county for.

4.3 Grant conditions state that the funds must be spent on this project by Mach 2011, therefore the works should be undertaken as soon as possible to avoid the possible reclaim of funds.

4.4 There is an additional cost to maintain the site of circa £7-10k per annum, these monies have been identified with parks budgets and efforts are being made to attain external funding to reduce these costs.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 This contract will be tendered in accordance with the council's procurement requirements.
- 5.2 The grant conditions stipulate that the play area will remain in place for no less than ten years.
- 5.3 The Barton Neighbourhood Association currently do not have a lease for the space they occupy within the Neighbourhood Centre. A new lease may lead to increased charges for the Neighbourhood Association.

6. Environmental Impact

- 6.1 The site encourages children to respect their natural surrounding and as such has a positive environmental impact.
- 6.2 An Environmental Survey has been conducted to assess the impact of the development on the site and recommendations in the report are being followed.

7. Risk

Risk register attached as appendix one

8. Recommendations

That the City Executive Board agrees:

- 1) To grant project approval for the procurement of contractors to construct a play facility at Barton and to undertake works at the Barton Neighbourhood Centre.
- 2) To delegate, to the Executive Director of City Services the authority to award the external and internal works contracts and progress works within the given budget.
- 3) That the works contract is only awarded if written confirmation from the funding body has been received confirming that there will be no attempt to claw back the grant allocation.

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Background Papers

Full ecological survey

Appendices

Appendix one – risk register

Appendix two - Plan of proposed playground

Appendix one - Play Barton report risk register

No.	Risk Description Link to Corporate Obj	Gross Risk		Cause of Risk	Mitigation	Net Risk		Further Management of Risk: Transfer/Accept/Reduce/Avoid	Monitoring Effectiveness			Current Risk		
Risk Score Impact Score: 1 =Insignificant; 2 = Minor; 3 = Moderate; 4 = Major; 5 = Catastrophic Almost Certain								Probability Score: 1 = Rare; 2 = Unlikely; 3 = Possible; 4 = Likely; 5 =						
1	Government cancel the scheme and claw back all none spent monies causing reputational damage	5	4	The governments emergency budget	1) That promotion of the scheme is kept to a minimum until the emergency budget is announced 2) The scheme is only progressed following written confirmation that there will be no claw back from the awarding body. Mitigation Owner GTV Mitigation dates June 2010	4	4	Action: Accept As per mitigation Action Owner: Ian Brooke / Kathleen Healy (GTV) Mitigation Control Owner: Kathleen Healy (GTV)	Outcome required: Further information post emergency budget Milestone Date: June 2010				5	4
2	The plans to use the Barton Neighbourhood Centre for indoor play are not successful	3	3	Increased charges for the changes to the lease conditions for the Neighbourhood Centre make this option unviable for the BCA	1) That the future lease reflects the nature of the work undertaken by the BCA and that the improvement works were externally funded 2) That the scheme progresses with no indoor space Mitigation Owner Ian Brooke Mitigation dates June 2010	3	2	Action: <i>Reduce</i> Attain written confirmation from Play England that this is acceptable Action Owner: Ian Brooke Mitigation Control Owner: Kathleen Healy (GTV)	Outcome required: Written confirmation from Play England that if we endeavour to provide an indoor space they will not attempt to claw back any funding Milestone Date: May 2010				3	2

Appendix Two - Plan of proposed adventure play area

