

Cabinet Meeting - 19th March 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Priory Park & Ruin – Outline 10 year management plan

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet's in principle approval to an outline 10 year management and maintenance plan for Priory Park & Ruin

Background

2. The historical significance of Priory Park may be summarised as follows:
 - It is a Grade II listed park
 - Priory Hall is a grade II listed building of special architectural or historic interest
 - The site includes the ruins of the 12th Century Priory of St James. These, and a considerable area around them, including medieval fish pond earthworks, are scheduled as an ancient monument
 - Much of the park is included in the Castle Hill Special Landscape Heritage Area
 - The park contains formal gardens, pleasure grounds, children's play provision, and multi use games area, tennis courts and former bowling greens
 - The lily pond is a designated Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
6. In 2004 a Masterplan for Priory Park was completed through the Liveability Programme, the preparation of which was accompanied by extensive community engagement in close liaison with the Friends of Priory Park
7. In 2004 the Friends of Priory Park received a project planning grant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This grant was used to undertake a number of studies and produce certain key reports, with the intention of the submission of a Stage 1 bid to the HLF under the Park for People programme. The work was completed in January 2006 and included a series of recommendations on further work that would be required should a bid for grant funding be prepared. However, following a change in HLF grant programmes in early 2006 it was decided not to make a submission at that time.
8. The HLF Parks for People programme is a two stage application process. Stage 1 is competitive, under which the HLF will be seeking evidence that the project will meet the outcomes of the grant criteria, that the project will be planned, managed and delivered effectively and that it represents value for money. Projects awarded a pass

at Stage 1 will be invited to progress to Stage 2 where the project will be assessed at a greater level of detail and any variations from the Stage 1 application will be reviewed.

9. In August 2007 the Council appointed heritage consultants The Conservation Studio to prepare a Stage 1 application to the HLF Parks for People Programme, for submission to the March 2008 bidding round. The Conservation Studio have an excellent track record in securing successful HLF grant approvals, and advised on the Council's successful Stage 2 grant approval for the Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative which is expected to commence in March 2008.
10. An officer team, which is attended by representatives of the Friends of Priory Park, is coordinating the preparation of the Stage 1 bid. The following documents being prepared in support of the bid are as follows:
 - Conservation management plan including masterplan and costs
 - Audience development plan
 - Access plan
 - Outline 10-year management and maintenance plan.
 - Evidence of community engagement
 - Training plan
 - Evidence of community consultation
11. Cabinet on the 13th February 2008 authorised the Director of the Urban Environment to submit a HLF Stage 1 application for funding to carry out improvements to Priory Park and Ruin, with a further report to be made to Cabinet when the outcome of the Stage 1 bid is known, and prior to any Stage 2 bid.
12. Since that time the officer team has developed the bid documents in preparation for submission of the Stage 1 bid to the HLF within the current bidding round by the end of March 2008, including outcomes of a consultation exercise on the proposals which was completed at the end of January 2008.
13. The HLF require that an outline costed 10 year management and maintenance plan be approved *in principle* by the applicant prior to the bid being submitted. A copy of the outline plan is included as Appendix A to this report.
14. In summary, the outline management and maintenance plan
 - Explains the relationship between the plan and the other documents referred to in paragraph 10 above
 - Sets out the history, importance, designations and stakeholders of the park and ruin
 - Sets out the enhanced standards that the management and maintenance plan seeks to deliver and the estimated costs of those standards
 - Sets out a suite of performance indicators for management and maintenance of the park and the means by which these will be measured and reviewed

15. As indicated in the report to Cabinet on the 13th February 2008, the Council is required to provide a minimum of 25% of the project costs as partnership funding. It is possible to provide this partnership funding through additional management and maintenance contributions to meet the increased standards required by the HLF
16. Consequently, the implementation of the 10 year management and maintenance plan is one of the main ways that the Council can deliver its partnership funding requirement at the same time as demonstrating its commitment to meeting the HLF's aspirations for the Parks for People programme
17. At this point all that is required is for the Council to support *in principle* the outline management and maintenance plan. The estimated cost of this uplift in standards to, amongst other things, meet Green Flag standards, is in the region of £80,000 per annum. These additional costs would only be incurred in the event of securing a successful Stage 2 approval and implementation of the improvements to the park with the enhanced features and maintenance regime that would follow.
18. Members will be aware that that in recent years the Council has provided increased levels of funding for the management and maintenance of parks and open spaces and it is possible that a proportion of the funding required for the 10 year management and maintenance plan can be found from these resources.
19. As mentioned in the report to Cabinet on the 13th February 2008, in the event of the Stage 1 application being successful, the stage 2 application will, amongst other things, seek to identify other sources of partnership funding available to the Council in order to meet the level needed for a successful bid to HLF.

Finance

20. The cost of preparing the outline 10 year management and maintenance plan for Priory Park and Ruin will be funded by resources held by the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Law

21. The statutory provisions for parks and public open spaces include the Open Spaces Act 1906 and the Public Health Act 1875 and the Council may do anything which is incidental to conducive to or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Equality Impact

22. The preparation of the Priory Park HLF Stage 1 bid accords with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
23. The views of children, young people and people with impaired mobility have been considered in the preparation of the Stage 1 bid

Recommendation

24. It is recommended that:

- Cabinet approves in principle the outline 10 year management and maintenance plan for Priory Park & Ruin.



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for **John Millar**
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Background Papers

Cabinet Report of 13th February 2008