

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

21 July 2020

Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 HAYSDEN COUNTRY PARK - MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020 - 2024

Summary

This report brings forward comments received during the public consultation on the draft Haysden Country Park Management Plan and recommends final approval of the Plan. The report also recognises the current Covid 19 situation and the impact this may have on future management of the site.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Service's Departmental Service Delivery Plan identifies the need to develop Management Plans for the Council's principal areas of public open space which includes Haysden Country Park.

1.1.2 This will be the fourth Management Plan for the Country Park and has been developed to give guidance and direction to the future management of the site for both users and managers. The previous Management Plan was highly successful in delivering projects and investment in the Park of over £195,000. The Management Plan is an essential requirement for the Green Flag Award, (the national annual award the Park has achieved since 2006); the Country Park Accreditation and the Local Nature Reserve status. It is intended that this document continues to be used as a management tool and provides a basis to steer future maintenance and development.

1.1.3 The overall aim for the site is to provide a Country Park that offers a welcoming place for recreational use that is compatible with its nature conservation features, ensuring the sites integrity is maintained for the benefit of local community. A balance is to be achieved between all key elements and none shall, within reason, dominate others.

1.2 Consultation

1.2.1 The draft Management Plan was circulated/made available for comment between 6 February and 13 March 2020 and can be found at **[Annex 1]**. An email was also circulated to key stakeholders, as listed at **[Annex 2]**, advising that copies of

the Plan were available on the Council's website and hard copies were available to view at the following locations; Tonbridge Castle Gateway, Council Offices, Kings Hill.

1.2.2 In addition, posters were displayed on site advising visitors on the consultation process and where/how to make comments.

1.2.3 In response to the consultation a number of comments were returned. These have been carefully considered and a number of subsequent amendments to the Management Plan have been proposed. A summary of the comments received, alongside any proposed amendments, can be found at **[Annex 3]** for Members consideration.

1.3 Covid 19

1.3.1 It is acknowledged that since the Management Plan was drafted, and consulted upon, the Covid 19 pandemic has impacted on the management and operation of the Park and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Since the car park was reopened the Park has seen a significant increase in usage and at times the car parks have reached full capacity. Whilst the majority of the site's activities and facilities are now back in operation, many are restricted by government guidance and all are operating in accordance with revised risk assessments. The financial impact of the pandemic on the Council's budgets will clearly limit opportunities to invest further in the site and there will be an even greater reliance on external funding and developer contributions. The pandemic has also seen a greater awareness of the benefits of enjoying the outdoors by the public and it is anticipated that the Park will grow in popularity in the future.

1.3.2 It is proposed that civil emergencies are included within the SWOT analysis for the site and that a new project is included in year one of the Action Plan to 'Review the impact of Covid 19 on the management of the site in both the short and long term'. This will allow the Council to undertake any necessary reorientation of the services as the country recovers from the pandemic. These proposed additions are reflected in **[Annex 3]**.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 Legal responsibilities and issues have been considered within the draft Management Plan.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The Management Plan reflects existing Capital and Revenue budgets associated within the site and highlights the need to maximise income generation and other external funding opportunities. The proposed review related to Covid 19 will also allow the Council's current overall financial position to be taken into consideration.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 A copy of the draft Management Plan has been circulated to the Council's Health and Safety Officer and no adverse comments have been received. In consultation with the Health and Safety Officer, a number of site specific risk assessments have already been developed for the site and these are referenced in the Management Plan.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 Appendix 4 in the Management Plan is an access audit for the site, covering the existing provision. A number of changes have been suggested and will be prioritised and actioned as funding allows. The impacts of any changes or new projects will be assessed as part of the work plan/ feasibility study for that project.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Asset Management; Biodiversity & Sustainability; Climate Change; Communications; Community; Equalities/Diversity; Health and Safety; Healthy Lifestyles; and Young People.

1.9 Recommendation

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the proposed amendments **BE MADE** to the draft Management Plan as shown in [**Annex 3**], and the Management Plan for Haysden Country Park 2020-2024 **BE APPROVED**.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Chris Fox

Market survey of Haysden Country Park

Robert Styles

Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services