

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CULTURE

TO:	MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS TRUSTEES SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	10 FEBRUARY 2020		
TITLE:	LANDSCAPE UPDATE REPORT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR EDWARDS	PORTFOLIO:	MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS CHAIR OF TRUSTEES
SERVICE:	TRUSTEE OF CHARITY	WARDS:	MAPLEDURHAM
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JOB TITLE:	LEISURE AND RECREATION MANAGER	E-MAIL:	ben.stanesby@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Trustees on the programme of works to implement the approved Landscape Master plan.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the works to implement the landscape plan are noted.

3 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Reading Borough Council holds the Ground in its capacity as charity trustee ("Trustee") of the Charity. The Charity is registered with (and therefore regulated by) the Charity Commission. The charitable object of the Charity is:

"the provision and maintenance of a recreation ground for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Mapledurham and the Borough of Reading without distinction of political, religious or other opinions."

The beneficiaries of the Charity, therefore, are the inhabitants of the Parish of Mapledurham and the Borough of Reading. The Ground is an asset of the Charity and is held "in specie" i.e. specifically in order to advance the Charity's object.

- 3.2 The Sub-Committee has delegated authority, with the support of the Officers, to discharge Reading Borough Council's functions as charity trustee of the Charity. The Sub-Committee has a duty to make all decisions in what it considers to be the best interests of the Charity and in order to advance the object referred to above and any such decision must be in line with all relevant charity law and other legal restrictions.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Landscape plan

- 4.1.1 The landscape plan was approved unanimously by members of the Trustee Sub Committee in February 2019 and the plan gained planning permission on 16th April 2019. Contractors were then procured for these works with works starting in the Summer 2019. Progress made is outlined below and summarised in a plan in appendix 1
- 4.1.2 The sports pitch regrading and drainage works started as planned with the aim to re-provide improved sports pitches by the start of the 2020 football season. This work was planned in two phases; the 1st phase is to re-grade and the soil, install primary drainage, and re-seed the area by the end of October; the 2nd phase is then to install secondary sand grooves drainage next April 2020. This provided a contingency of several months for the areas to become established for the 2020/21 football season
- 4.1.3 Due to the weight of the machinery and the need to be able to work the soil, the soil conditions are important and very heavily dependent on prevailing weather conditions. Exceptionally wet weather conditions have been experienced since late September through into January. Periodic rain is preventing the ground becoming able to bear the weight of machinery for laying drains. Should we get a few days of frozen ground it would be possible to lay the drains. The medium range forecast is also showing unsettled weather for at least the next 6 weeks and with no frost.
- 4.1.4 Agripower had aimed to recommence drainage laying in the winter and seed laying in early spring to mitigate the lost time. This looks increasingly unlikely to be possible. It is therefore also unlikely we will be able to recommence work until mid-spring, weather permitting. With this delay and grass seed being sown in late spring if we then experience a prolonged dry period grass establishment may then also take longer increasing the risk of pitches not being ready for this September.
- 4.1.5 This is also delaying the removal of the Heras fencing.
- 4.1.6 The commencement of use of this area for formal sports would be determined by the external sports consultant who will assess the strength of the new turf once suitably established. As a precaution, officers are to meet with Caversham Trent FC to produce contingency plans and will ensure alternate sports pitches at Christchurch Meadows will be kept available until this area is ready to use and we thank them for their on-going cooperation.
- 4.1.7 The informal paths around the heras fencing surrounding the Agripower works have become very muddy in sections due to the wet weather experienced and limited space. This has been problematic throughout the winter and Parks have been endeavouring to lay woodchip down along these muddy areas. This is on-going and Parks are continuing to apply woodchip. The area to the west of the fenced area and through the wood is still to be completed.
- 4.1.8 In the west of the playing fields, the new children's play area successfully

opened in its new location for the October half term holidays and has been a popular improvement to MPF. Again, mud around the play area has been problematic necessitating a temporary stone chip path.

4.1.9 The perimeter wood post and rail fence has been installed along the MPF / Hewett Avenue boundary connecting the breedon gravel footpaths. There is a request for the highways team to improve pedestrian access from the highway at the three entrances along Hewett Avenue into the playing fields. A temporary stone path has also recently been installed to connect the breedon pathway on this side of MPF to the new children's play area.

4.1.10 The Parks team were also going to install the new avenue of trees in December. The location of the trees overlaps the work area of Agripower, to prevent risks of damage to the trees has led to a delay in the planting until next winter. It is planned to install the new central breedon gravel footpath and trim trail in early summer once the Agripower works are complete.

4.1.11 Drainage ditches along the highways grass verge of Hewett Avenue into the Playing Fields have been re-established by Highways to help reduce water build up on the road. Some of this water however is held back from dissipating further into the playing fields by the new path running parallel to the road. This is creating pooled water a few inches deep in one area within the playing fields which was taking a few days to dissipate. A slightly deeper ditch has been dug just before the northern most access point to draw more water off the road before it would be held by the path. It is unclear if the very wet weather and saturated ground this winter has meant pooling has formed this year which in other years would not expect to persist for more than a few hours. Similarly, the impact of deepening the northern drainage ditch has not been assessed as rain fall has lessened slightly over the last couple of weeks since the ditch was dug. The situation will continue to be monitored.

4.1.12 In addition to the identified detail in the landscape plan, there has been a request to install a tarmac surface from the highway across the grass verge to two of the northern and southern Hewett Avenue breedon gravel path entrances as improvements to these entrances and prevent muddy paths building up.

4.1.13 The area identified for an overflow car park is being used as part to house site offices, the final surface of this area is still to be agreed.

4.1.14 Legal advice has been sought to identify whether automated number plate recognition may be used for car park management.

4.2 Summary of completed works

See attached landscape plan at appendix 1 and includes:

- New 600m² children's play area
- Post and rail fence along Hewett Avenue
- West side 250m breedon gravel footpath
- South side 120m breedon gravel footpath
- North side 100m temporary stone path to new play area

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A comprehensive consultation exercise was undertaken in the summer of 2017 to establish the views of beneficiaries, which generated 3,313 valid responses. This was reported in detail to the Sub Committee on 9 January 2018. This was used as the basis for developing the landscape plan
- 5.2 A further round of consultation was undertaken as part of the decision-making process by planning when determining the application for the landscape works.
- 5.3 Once the works started on site, regular update letters have been provided to neighbouring residents with the same information provided on the contractor's heras fencing and posted on the Council's webpage. A meet the Kier contractor drop-in session was also held on 14th August with Officers in attendance for informal discussions on the landscape works.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to-
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2 In this regard you must consider whether the decision will or could have a differential impact on: racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief.
- 6.3 An updated equality impact assessment (EIA) for the Landscape Plan was undertaken and reported to the June 2018 Sub-Committee. There has been no material change to the proposals being made and the EIA remains valid.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 At the October 2019 Trustees meeting the enhancement funding available was confirmed as:

Funding	Funding source
£1,361,039	DfE lease payment
£ 85,000	s106 pavilion works
£1,446,039	Total

- 7.2 From the £1,446,039 enhancement funds the following enhancement items have currently been procured or committed expenditure:

Cost	Description
£ 87,281	Agripower sport pitch enhancement portion of £576,755 total works

£ 20,206	Children play area enhancement portion of £112,654 total works
£ 43,048	Fees on all enhancement portion of £873,684 total external works
£ 27,416	Central path lighting - 12 columns incl ducting
£ 1,450	Specimen trees - english oaks
£ 5,815	Boundary fence - Hewett Avenue side
£ 24,797	Trim trail - 6 units including safety surfacing
£ 907,000	Pavilion improvement works*
£1,117,013	Total

*A separate report to Trustees on the pavilion procurement seeks approval on increasing the budget for the pavilion works (including fees and a small contingency) by £82k to £907k

7.3 The following items are yet to be procured:

Budget	Description
£ 11,000	Extra benches and bins (8 benches and 4 bins are to be installed as part of the mitigation works)
£ 5,000	Entrance improvements
£ 25,000	Landscaping improvements around the pavilion
£ 35,000	Small overflow parking area north of the new school
£100,000	Maintenance on capital works
£176,000	Total

7.4 On current forecasts, from the original enhancement budget of £1,446,039 with committed expenditure of £1,117,013 and £176,000 of future commitments detailed above gives a total spend of £1,2930,013.

This currently leaves £153,026 of unallocated enhancement funds for future grant or match funding for future capital schemes

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Sub-Committee has been delegated the power by the Council acting in its capacity as sole corporate Trustee of the Charity to act in the best interests of the Charity and its beneficiaries.

8.2 These works are classified as a 'Works' contract and the cost falls well below the threshold which would require an OJEU advertisement for a 'Works' contract. The procurement of these works has been conducted in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee - 9th January 2018.

9.2 Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee - 20th June 2018.

9.3 Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee - 22nd October 2018.

9.4 Papers Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee 30th January 2019.

9.5 Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee - 7th May 2019

9.6 Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee - 15th October 2019

Works Progress

