



# Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

## Notice of NON KEY Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Investment in Harrow Lodge Park
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Roger Ramsey Leader of the Council
<b>CMT Lead:</b>	Andrew Blake Herbert Group Director Communities and Resources
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Simon Parkinson Head of Culture and Leisure Services X2199 Simon.Parkinson@haverling.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013-15
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The proposal is to spend a total of £1.406m, with funding identified.
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	Towns and Communities
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	No

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Havering will be clean and its environment will be cared for	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
People will be safe, in their homes and in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residents will be proud to live in Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## **Part A – Report seeking decision**

### **DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION**

The detail of the decision requested and the recommended action is to:

1. To recommend to Council to add to the capital budget a scheme at Harrow Lodge Park to the value of £1.406m, noting that there is already a budget of £56k, so there is an increase in the overall capital budget of £1.350m.
2. Refer this increase to Council for ratification.

### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

Part 4, Rules of Procedure, Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, Section 3  
– Decisions outside the budget or policy framework.

### **STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

#### **Reasons for the decision:**

The decision is to be taken to significantly improve one of Havering's largest and most popular parks and to bring it to a sufficiently high standard to allow a Green Flag application to be made. Local residents have expressed concern about the quality of the park and, although investments have been made in recent years, there is still a significant amount of work required to bring the park up to a standard that local residents now expect in Havering. Harrow Lodge Park is one of the top 25 parks that was identified as requiring investment.

#### **Background**

Costain donated 34.86 acres to the Hornchurch Urban District Council in 1936, 'for use as a public open space'. In 1937 land was added to Harrow Lodge Park when the Council paid the London County Council £16,250 for the 42 acre Harrow Lodge Farm.

Many of the early plans for this park were delayed by the Second World War, when 60 acres of land was used for intensive food production. A comprehensive layout was proposed in the late 1940s. A disused pit was filled in with waste material to create four tennis courts and a rockery in 1948/49 and an 18-hole miniature golf course was created in 1952/53, when entrance gates and railings were also built at Rainham Road. An 8.5-acre Boating Lake was formed in 1954/56 by damming the River Ravensbourne, together with paths, shrubs, trees and formal features, and a walled garden near the lake was created in 1959/60. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1961 a Garden for the Blind was opened, next to the Harrow Lodge building and a children's playground was added in the early 1960s. An avenue of horse chestnuts leads from Hornchurch Road to the small pond in front of the Lodge. The largest lake has large flocks of mute swan

## Key Executive Decision

and Canada geese and on one of its wooded islands has a small heronry. Kingfishers are regularly seen here. Other trees planted included oak, elm, lime, larch, Corsican pine, cherry, hazel and yew.

Harrow Lodge developed as the main nursery for Hornchurch Urban District Council with the first greenhouses provided in 1947 and heated frames added by 1960. The park included showcase carpet beds outside the swimming pool and a rock garden was established as early as 1948. When the London Borough of Havering was created in 1965 the nursery at Harrow Lodge remained, but was subsequently closed in the 1980's.

Harrow Lodge Park now covers more than 120 acres (approx. 54k square metres) and remains a popular place for people to enjoy the playgrounds, sports facilities, planting and the wildlife. It is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation including the borders of River Ravensbourne, as well as small wooded areas and less intensively managed parts of the park.

The annual grounds maintenance cost (revenue cost) for Harrow Lodge Park is around £113,800. The maintenance is undertaken by the Council's Grounds Maintenance team.

Streetcare are responsible for managing the path lighting that is located in the park and for managing tree maintenance work.

The Park is located in 3 different wards: Hylands, St Andrews and Elm Park wards.

## Where we are now

Over the last five years there have been a range of investments made that have improved specific items/areas of Harrow Lodge Park. These investments are listed below. However, the investments made thus far are not sufficient to bring the park in to line with the high quality environment found in other parks of a similar size in the borough. Nor have the investments put the Council in a position to secure Green Flag status, as many aspects of the park that do not currently meet Green Flag standards. A significant amount of further investment is therefore needed.

There have been changes to the methods used to manage the park, with the biggest change being the introduction of the Meadows Policy in 2011. This resulted in approximately 33% of the grassland in the park being allowed to grow as meadow grass, with grass footpaths cut into it.

The park has a Conservation Group who undertake various works in the parks on a voluntary basis. The core group is made up of a limited number of volunteers, but other volunteers have been involved in some of the one-off clearance works that have taken place over the last few years. Although this group has an interest in conservation, none of its members have any formal training in conservation management. Recently they (along with local residents) have been concerned about the condition of the lakes and the problems that have impacted on wildlife.

There are several people interested in forming a Friends group. The Council will be

## **Key Executive Decision**

encouraging the formation of a Friends Group as generating community involvement is one of the essential prerequisites for obtaining Green Flag status.

### **Investments that have already been made and are due to be made in the near future.**

In the last five years the following investments have been made:

9 X litter bins	2,970.00
6 x benches	6,396.00
34 x bollards	2,216.46
Play area improvements (northern end)	70,000.00
Play area improvements (southern end)	118,000.00
Resurface tennis courts and install skate park.	100,000.00
Path repairs	24,189.67
Replacement of tennis nets	234.00
Repairs to fence line near Streetcare Depot and new barrier	2,464.00
Retaining wall and slab resetting	596.00
Fountains repair	4,500.52
Two new "springies" (southern end)	1,500.00
Wet pour repairs	800.00
Tree works	4,750.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>338,616.65</b>

In addition to the above, Streetcare have invested in improving the lighting and the following investments are currently being progressed:

Desilting of the eastern lake	300,000
Refurbishment of the Café, including new toilets	140,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>440,000</b>

### **Further Investments required to achieve Green Flag status**

The following further investments will need to be made to achieve Green Flag status:

#### *Resurfacing works including the car parks*

Many of the pathways around the park are pitted and potholed, plus trees have lifted areas of tarmac to create an uneven surface. There are very large areas of hard surface in the park, including car park area and therefore the cost of the resurfacing works will be significant.

#### *Lighting improvements*

Many areas of the park are accessible 24/7, but due to the poor lighting in certain places, the public will not use certain paths. Areas around the lake, the cafe and the main access paths need to have new lighting installed.

## **Key Executive Decision**

### *Dredging the lake*

Works to dredge the eastern lake is being carried out in the Spring of 2015, but no works are being undertaken to the western lake, which also has problems with silt. Therefore this lake would also require a desilting programme using the same method used on the eastern lake.

### *Improvements to the Cafe area*

The café is being refurbished and is due to reopen in Summer 2015. However, these works do not deal with the area outside the café, by the lakeside, or issues with the roof. This area outside the café requires urgent refurbishment as it does not meet Equalities Act standards.

### *Lake edge improvements*

Some works were undertaken to restore the lake edge during the dredging works but this work needs to continue into the western lake as many of the edges of this lake are in poor condition.

### *Soft landscaping*

In order to achieve a Green Flag the entrances to the park need to be defined and welcoming. The easiest method of doing this is by planting and signage. There are several areas around the park that could be enhanced by soft landscape improvements. The old boating lake needs redesigning and there are several places such as the play area and tennis courts that could be enhanced with planting.

### *Railing/Gate repairs/painting*

There are a number of gates and railings on the site that are not serving any function and need to be removed. In addition the area beside the Rainham Road should be considered for fencing due to the proximity of the children's play area. The fire barriers at each of the car park entrances do not look very aesthetically pleasing and should be replaced by proper railings and gates.

### *Tree works*

The site needs a lot of tree work if it is to be awarded a Green Flag.

### *Play area improvements*

The park has two main play areas both of these could be improved including adding items for children with disabilities. There are several items of play equipment that should be replaced.

### The costs of the required works are

The table below contains estimates of works required to bring the site up to a high quality standard and to the standard required to obtain a Green Flag.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
Resurfacing works, including the car parks and paths	334,000
Lighting improvements	130,000
Dredging the western lake	300,000
Improvements to the Cafe building (roof)	75,000

## **Key Executive Decision**

Lake edge improvements	150,000
Soft landscaping	170,000
Railing/Gate repairs/painting	25,000
Tree works	75,000
Play area improvements	25,000
Park Furniture	90,000
New Signage	40,000
CCTV	5,000
River/drainage improvement works	75,000
Improved aeration for the lake	30,000
Contingency at 5%	76,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,600,000</b>
Less funds dependent on external funding	(194,000)
<b>Budget formally requested now</b>	<b>1,406,000</b>

The above figures are estimates only at this stage and more detailed costs / quotes would need to be secured before the figures could be confirmed. As part of the scheme officers will be exploring whether the pumping station can be restored and if this proved possible, a saving could be made in comparison to the budget identified to de silt the western lake. Should a saving on this item, or any other individual item, materialise, it is proposed that further investment is made in the park to ensure the sustainability of the improvements that are being made over a longer time period (for example, by implementing higher quality materials where improvements are made).

It is worth noting that a risk remains to securing a Green Flag award as a result of the current issues relating to the management of water and sewerage flows through the park. In a worst case scenario this could negatively impact on the judging of the park on a particular day, potentially putting the Green Flag award at risk. However, in view of this, officers would put contingency arrangements in place, including a planned response from Thames Water should that be needed, to reduce this risk as far as possible.

### **Timetable for the works**

Works would begin in the autumn of 2015 and would be completed by December 2016, ahead of a Green Flag application in early 2017. The Council would hear the outcome of the Green Flag application in June 2017.

### **Funding the works**

It is proposed to fund the works through a variety of funding sources as set out below:

### Key Executive Decision

	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Budget / Funding in 15/16 (£k)</b>	<b>Funding in 16/17 (£k)</b>	<b>Total Funding (£k)</b>
1	Culture and Leisure Capital Programme (15/16 already allocated)	56	50	106
2	Additional Capital Programme allocation	600	700	1,300
3	<b>Total budget requested now</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>1,406</b>
4	External funding		194	194
5	<b>Maximum possible budget</b>		<b>944</b>	<b>1,600</b>

Bids will be made to the Veolia North Thames Trust and the London Marathon Trust to secure the external funding that is required. Should the Council not be able to secure the required external funding the improvement works to the park would have to be delivered with a reduced budget. It is not believed that this would put the Green Flag application at risk: rather it would probably mean the next phase of improvement works (in the future) would need to take place at an earlier stage than would otherwise be the case as a result of less sustainable materials being used, in comparison to the materials that would be used if the ideal level of investment was secured.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The option of not investing in Harrow Lodge Park was considered but rejected because the park would continue to provide a relatively poor quality environment compared to many other parks of a similar size in Havering.

The option of not applying for Green Flag standard was considered but rejected because this standard has been achieved in 9 other parks in Havering, with 4 more parks expected to achieve Green Flag status in the next 2-3 years; so this has become the standard to aspire to when significant investments are planned for individual parks.

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

Consultation has taken place with local residents and the Conservation Volunteers group based in the park, over a number of years. The improvements that have been previously requested will be addressed in the programme of improvements that are planned to be delivered.

## **Key Executive Decision**

### **NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Simon Parkinson

Designation: Head of Culture and Leisure Services

Signature:

Date:

## **Part B - Assessment of implications and risks**

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no additional legal issues.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There is currently a budget of £56k for this scheme. This report is asking for approval to increase this budget by £1.350m, to create a budget of £1.406m. This is currently profiled to be spent £656k 15/16, £750k 16/17.

This will increase the size of the overall capital budget, and thus will require the approval of Council.

Should external funding be secured, the budget can be further increased by lead member decision

As with any major capital project there is a risk that original estimates are exceeded when tenders and /or quotes are received for the required works. Should this situation arise Culture and Leisure Services will be expected to elements of the project to keep the overall costs within the overall budget, or additional external income will need to be secured. Once the budget has been confirmed as being £1.406m Culture and Leisure Services will be expected to provide the necessary project management to ensure the budget is not exceeded during the project delivery stage.

The capital investment will bring some additional revenue pressures at certain times of the year, as a result of the intention to retain the Green Flag status once it has been achieved. On the other hand experience has shown that creating high quality environments with the borough's parks and open spaces has reduced costs associated with graffiti, damage to Council property and anti-social behaviour. Any net increase in revenue costs will be met within existing Culture and Leisure revenue budgets.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

There are no Human Resources implications or risks associated with this report.



## **Key Executive Decision**

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The proposals included in this report will have a positive impact on local residents across all protected characteristics, particularly children and young people (and their families), older residents and disabled people. The park will become more inclusive, accessible and enjoyable to visit. It is envisaged that the proposed improvements will also lead to increased use of the park and should result in people feeling safer when they visit it.

Every effort will be made to minimise any temporary disruptions for local residents with protected characteristics, particularly disabled people and older residents.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013-15



**Key Executive Decision**

**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**

Signed:



Name: Councillor Roger Ramsey  
Leader of the Council

Date:

11.6.2015

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Andrew Beesley, Committee Administration & Interim Member Support Manager in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on 12 JUNE 2015

Signed



