

Chichester District Council

CABINET

5 April 2022

Report from the Priory Park Task and Finish Group

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

2.1 That Cabinet note the findings of the task and finish group in section 5, and resolve:

- (a) That the changes to the Events strategy set out in Appendix B are approved.**
- (b) Officers to continue supportive discussions with the Bowls club and the Cricket club to explore their aspirations for development of their respective facilities, and the funding available consistent with those aspirations.**
- (c) Officers continue to explore a community or commercial use for the brick pavilion.**
- (d) Proposals for refurbishment of the public conveniences be progressed at the earliest opportunity.**
- (e) Officers to bring to cabinet proposals for reprovision of the play equipment.**

2.2 Cabinet are also asked to consider whether parish councils should be approached to seek contributions towards parks that are maintained at CDC expense, para 5.2.

3. Background

- 3.1. The September 2021 meeting of Council received a motion from Councillor Richard Plowman as set out in Appendix A. This motion was carried and Cabinet subsequently set up a task and finish group Chaired by Councillor Alan Sutton in order to address the issues raised by the motion.**
- 3.2. The task and finish group have met three times. Representatives from the Bowls club and the Cricket club were invited to address the group as part of the first meeting.**
- 3.3. This report sets out the current position in relation to the Events Strategy and Policy, and the proposed way forward for each of the assets within the park that were subject to the motion.**

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

4.1. To address the concerns raised by the motion regarding the use of Priory Park, and the subsequent Council resolution.

5. Proposal

5.1. During the meetings several issues were debated including the availability of funding for Priory Park projects. There may be a need to reallocate some of the asset replacement programme (ARP funding). However, it will not be possible to do this until we are clear on the way forward for the redevelopment of some of the park buildings (see below).

5.2. The debate on funding also lead to a wider point on the funding of parks generally and specifically the fact that some parishes, predominantly the rural parishes, fund their own parks. The Future Services Framework has identified investment in parks as a relatively low priority given the current financial climate that the Council is in. Cabinet may therefore wish to debate the merits of engaging with parishes, where CDC maintain parks, to see if those parishes are willing to either assume responsibility or make a financial contribution towards the maintenance or enhancements.

5.3. **Events Strategy** – the Events Strategy 2020 - 2025 (attached at Appendix B) has been updated to reflect the motion from Councillor Richard Plowman approved at Council on 21 September 2021.

An additional bullet point, as set out below, has been added to the Strategy at the section titled ‘*CDC Hire of Land*’ (page 9). No other changes were required to be made to the Strategy itself.

“Priory Park has limitations in terms of access and the dual role as a war memorial making it unsuitable for Headline and large scale feature events involving construction of major temporary buildings or structures which have the potential to damage the fabric of this historic Park.”

5.4. **White Pavilion** – discussions will continue with the Cricket Club regarding their proposal to lease the White Pavilion and make alterations/improvements to the building to support their aspirations to develop women’s and girls’ cricket in Priory Park. Officers will consider if and how the ARP funds allocated for this building could be used to support the refurbishment works needed, together with a review of other potential funding from s106 or CIL. The Cricket Club are looking for the project to take a minimum of 2/3 years, depending on securing funding and planning permission. In the meantime, the Council will continue to maintain and repair the building to prevent any deterioration in its condition.

5.5. **Brick Pavilion** – the Estates team will follow up on interest in the building from local community groups, with a focus on ensuring there is a full awareness of the level of work and expenditure required to bring the building up to current lettable standards. Officers will also consider other options for the building, considering the available ARP funds. Options will also be explored to address the ongoing issues with vandalism. It is anticipated that the planned demolition of the old depot

building behind the brick pavilion and the lowering of the adjacent wall will help reduce anti-social behaviour and vandalism in this area, as this corner of the park will be opened up with improved sight lines and general visibility.

5.6. **Bowls club** – discussions to continue between the Bowls Club and the Estates team to help develop their plans to extend the current Bowls Pavilion. The Club have confirmed they do not wish to take a lease of the Brick Pavilion and will focus on improvements to their existing premises. The timescale of this will be driven by the Bowls Club and supported by CDC officers.

5.7. **Public Conveniences** – The public conveniences in Priory Park are included on the Asset Replacement Programme (ARP) for refurbishment and improvement during 2022/23. Officers are currently developing a specification for works for the site and will be tendering the refurbishment works in the coming months.

5.8. **Play Provision** - Funding for play equipment replacement is included the 2022/23 ARP along with several other parks within a similar timeframe. Each refurbishment will require varying degrees of consultation and engagement with local communities and interested parties to ensure suitable and appropriate play provision. Consideration is currently being given as how Priory Park and other similar schemes can be brought to fruition. Previously these schemes were grouped together and delivered under a single delivery programme with a dedicated resource to ensure this was undertaken in a timely and efficient way.

6. Alternatives Considered

6.1 None. Cabinet were tasked to undertake the review by Council.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

7.1 The recent work by members on the Future Services Framework (FSF) has identified parks as being a relatively low priority. Although the FSF has not led to funding reductions for services, including the parks service, it is unlikely that further budget increases would gain support at Council. The proposals that stem from this review will be developed and brought back to members for consideration with the aim to utilise existing budget provision only and not require additional investment.

8. Consultation

8.1 The task and finish group engaged with both the Bowles and Cricket clubs as part of the process to understand their aspirations of the buildings occupied by them.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

9.1 We may want to indicate here something about how the change in events may impact.

10. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Climate Change and Biodiversity		X

Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing		X
Other		X

11. Appendix

11.1 Motion to September 2021 Council – Appendix A

11.2 Events Strategy 2020 – 2025 – Appendix B

12. Background Papers

12.1 None