

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

**Subject:** Central Park Masterplan  
**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 March 2013  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Vincent  
**CMT Member:** Anthony Payne (Director for Place)  
**Author:** Richard Bara – Urban Designer  
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**Ref:** RB/CPAAP/3.  
**Key Decision:** Yes  
**Part:** I

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### **Purpose of the report:**

This report seeks the adoption of a Masterplan for Central Park. The Masterplan updates the Council's approach and commitment to the enhancement of the Park as set out in Policy CP04 of the Central Park Area Action Plan (AAP).

The report responds to the need to re-focus the Council's efforts to deliver the Park enhancements in co-operation with the community including the newly formed Central Park Community Forum. The report also recommends that a business case be prepared to ensure the financial sustainability of the Park and recommends that certain funds are earmarked for environmental enhancements.

The report recommends adoption of a Masterplan and delivery of a series of prioritised schemes. This prioritisation has been done as a result of workshops with the newly formed Central Park Community Forum which represents the main stakeholders in the Park, including the Friends of Central Park and Ward Councillors.

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### **Corporate Plan 2012-2015:**

This report directly supports the Council's vision for the City, supporting its ability to deliver growth by providing high quality and accessible green infrastructure to meet the anticipated future recreational and leisure needs of Plymouth.

In addition, the delivery of this Masterplan and the establishment of the Community Forum will support the Council's other three priorities in the following ways:

- 'Providing value for communities' – by ensuring that development opportunities are not lost securing resources to help deliver improvements for communities as appropriate;
- 'Raising aspirations' – by empowering communities to be involved in decision making and working in partnership with others to achieve enhancements;
- 'Reducing inequalities' – in particular by involving communities in decision making and providing additional resources and opportunities that can support social cohesion.

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## **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:**

Individual projects that support the delivery of the Masterplan will be developed with the assistance of the newly established Central Park Community Forum and will go through the Council's established project development processes to; a) approve each capital project, b) to formally secure developer contributions collected for strategic green spaces, sports, recreation and playing pitches and c) to approve grant funding bids to heritage, environmental, sports and other bodies.

Overall, the Masterplan is seeking £11.24m of improvements in a manner which does not impact on the Council's existing capital programme. It sets out a framework for the following levels of future investments in different elements of the Park:

- £2.75 Million for outdoor sports;
- £4.63 Million towards enhancing footpaths, access and Park entrances;
- £2.15 Million to improving Park facilities (cafés, playgrounds, skate park etc.);
- £1.21 Million to enhancing the Park's biodiversity and landscape qualities;
- £0.5 Million for sustainable drainage solutions.

The delivery of the Park enhancements will be realised from a combination of funding sources including enabling development in the Park, developer contributions citywide, successful grant funding bids from heritage, sports and environmental bodies, and partnerships now strengthened with agencies and stakeholders including the Friends of Central Park.

The Council does not ring fence Capital receipts against specific schemes, however the Council is aware of the important historic purposes of the land which forms part of the Park. It is committed to ensuring that the value of this land is realised to allow the Council to afford investment into the quality of Central Park, thereby honouring this important historic legacy.

The on-going revenue cost implications of the capital improvements will need to be quantified at each stage of the Masterplan's delivery and agreed with the budget holder before going ahead. This will include consideration of funding opportunities that may arise through links with the voluntary sector.

The Assistant Director for Planning Services will coordinate officer resource from different areas of the Council to facilitate the delivery of the Masterplan from existing resources (to include representation from the Directorates of Place, People, Corporate Services and the Chief Executives Department) in consultation with the relevant Directors.

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## **Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

The establishment and operation of the Community Forum is already empowering communities to take an active part in decision making. This will continue to be supported offering opportunities for the Council to work in co-operation with the Community and other agencies, supporting the delivery of the Masterplan projects and developing outcomes with significant community benefits.

The implementation of this Masterplan will directly support the promotion of community safety. This will be achieved through the provision of improved infrastructure, providing in particular improved street-lighting and footpaths, which will encourage better patronage of the Park. The improvements to facilities will provide enhanced opportunities in respect of access and visitor support for people of all ages and needs.

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## Equality and Diversity:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed at the time the Central Park Area Action Plan was submitted for adoption and focused on the original Policy CP04 (Park Enhancements) which this Masterplan now addresses. The key issues identified were around travel, accessibility, and inclusivity with regard to planned new facilities and public safety within the Park.

- Travel, accessibility and inclusivity concerns are addressed by proposals to improve public access to the Park through the building of new footpaths, improving the condition of existing links, providing improved public transport facilities and delivering new park facilities which would make peoples visit to the Park easier and more enjoyable especially for those people with physical disabilities and those with young children.
- Safety concerns are addressed by proposed improvements to the condition of paths, lighting, the greater vibrancy that will be created by the overall enhancement of the Park and the higher levels of use the Park will experience as a result.

The equality impact assessment identified that the Central Park Area Action Plan would result in positive impacts on the quality of life of race groups, people with a disability, men and women, young people and older people and it considered that there will be no adverse impacts on any of the equalities groups.

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## Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 1) Adopt the Central Park Masterplan of Environmental Enhancement.

**Reason:** To enable the City Council to progress the enhancement of Central Park in accordance with the adopted Central Park Area Action Plan and the Council's priority pledge 38 and to maintain the strategic growth needs of the city.

- 2) Express continued support for the Central Park Community Forum.

**Reason:** To continue the positive dialogue with stakeholders, including the Friends of Central Park, over the projected delivery programme and capture opportunities for voluntary sector involvement in both the implementation of enhancements, future management and maintenance of the Park. The Community Forum will be used to inform future detailed enhancements of Central Park, implementing the Masterplan and adding value through voluntary sector initiatives and co-operative working.

- 3) Agree that a business case be prepared to ensure the financial sustainability of the ongoing operational costs, maintenance and upkeep in line with capital developments at Central Park.

**Reason:** To enable the City Council to progress the development of Central Park in line with its corporate targets as set out in its corporate plan to maintain the strategic growth needs of the city.

- 4) Agree that funding equivalent to the value of any future capital receipts, gained as a result of enabling development in the Park, are utilised to support the delivery of the environmental enhancements as set out in this Masterplan.



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**Sign off:**

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Originating SMT Member: Paul Barnard, Assistant Director for Planning, Directorate of Place.													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Central Park is a key example of a Park not living up to its potential. Its remarkable size, varied landscape and central location offer significant opportunities to the city to address the growing needs of an expanding population for leisure and recreation activities.
- 1.2 The requirement to develop a Masterplan of environmental enhancements was made explicit in the Central Park Area Action Plan (AAP) adopted by Council in September 2008, and would expand upon the initial objectives set out in the AAP's Park Enhancement Policy CP04 (chapter 6). This was achieved on 29th March of 2011.
- 1.3 The Masterplan delivers priority pledge 38 which seeks to “restate the Council’s commitment to protect Central Park as Plymouth’s Green Lung”, improving green spaces and encouraging better use of land for the community. The Masterplan also provides an opportunity to re-focus the delivery of the Parks enhancement in line with its Cooperative Council aspirations. This will ensure that delivery happens in partnership with the community and stakeholders.
- 1.4 To achieve this Officers, together with the Cabinet Member for the Environment, have initiated the formation of the Central Park Community Forum (which represents the main stakeholder interests in the Park along with Ward Councillors and the Friends of Central Park) and have undertaken a series of meetings to develop the Masterplan, using cooperative principles.
- 1.5 The Community Forum has concluded that the six original objectives from the AAP for the Masterplan remain relevant for the City’s needs and are drafted at a sufficiently high level not to stifle changing circumstances in the foreseeable future:
  - a) **To promote a strong vision for the Park** – Central Park to be one of the city’s premier parks dedicated to the improvement of the health of Plymouth people through informal and formal recreation and sport;
  - b) **Create a Park with quality features** – the Park to have new and quality distinctive buildings, features and objects which will delight and engender positive memories for residents and visitors alike;
  - c) **Create a Park, which is easy to move through and to access** - complete the primary routes of the unfinished footpath system, improving the physical condition of existing routes, linking places and facilities within the Park and properly connect the Park to the surrounding neighbourhoods and the city;
  - d) **Create a Park with quality outdoor sports, leisure and play facilities** - rationalise the existing sports provisions in the Park providing new facilities to meet sporting and leisure needs of the city.
  - e) **Create a Park with improved landscape and biodiversity** – improve existing and create new habitats, including species rich grasslands, hedgerows, woodlands and wetlands and simultaneously improve the landscape qualities of the Park.
  - f) **A Park with resolved land drainage issues** - develop innovative land drainage solutions for the Park using a linked systems of open watercourses and water-bodies, designed to deliver significant biodiversity gains, resolving localised flooding issues and erosion currently experienced.

## **2.0 THE MASTERPLAN**

**2.1** The Community Forum has been able to identify several detailed suggestions devised to make delivery of the enhancements more achievable and these are:

- a) The sports changing room building has been reduced in scale, moved and integrated with the proposed new café by the golf course and existing children's playground;
- b) Sections of proposed footpath works and the resurfacing works to two existing routes, currently in good order have been deleted from the plan;
- c) The outdoor theatre element has been moved from the north of the Park to the central feature space to make it more accessible;
- d) The inclusion of a new community orchard in Zoo field;
- e) Potential pay and display on street car parking within the planned new housing development at Pennycomequick has been reduced by 50% in response to the relocated sports changing rooms;
- f) The existing sports changing rooms adjacent to the baseball field has been retained and will be refurbished as part of the plan and dedicated to serve the baseball pitch.

The proposed Masterplan is provided as Appendix I to this report.

**2.2** The Community Forum have paid particular attention to the revenue implications of any proposal, seeking to minimise existing commitments and maximise commercial revenue gains as a result of proposals where possible and reasonable.

## **3.0 COSTS AND FUNDING**

**3.1** A detailed cost estimation model for the Park has informed a schedule of prices for individual works, totals for each area of enhancement and an overall total for the Park as a whole.

**3.2** Overall, the Masterplan provides a vision for the future delivery of a programme of enhancement worth £11.24 million in a manner which does not impact on the Council's existing capital programme. It seeks the following investments:

- £2.75 Million for outdoor sports;
- £4.63 Million towards enhancing footpaths, access and Park entrances;
- £2.15 Million to improving park facilities (café's, playgrounds, skate park etc.);
- £1.21 Million to enhancing the Park's biodiversity and landscape qualities;
- £0.5 Million for sustainable drainage solutions.

**3.3** The delivery of the Park enhancements can be realised from a combination of sources including enabling development in the Park, developer's contributions citywide, successful grant funding bids from heritage, sports and environmental bodies, and partnerships now strengthened with agencies and stakeholders, including the Friends of Central Park. The Park contains many different components and this provides the opportunity to bring together resources from many different sources to ensure the vision becomes a successful reality.

**3.4** The Masterplan provides a framework that supports the development of project bids to external grant funding organisations. Opportunities to bid for external grants often require match funding and to achieve this the Masterplan recognises that a proportion of the land could be developed in order to realise inward investment into the Park. The Council does not ring fence Capital receipts against specific schemes, however the Council is aware of the important

historic purposes of this land and is committed to ensuring that the value of this land is realised to allow the Council to afford investment into the quality of Central Park, thereby honouring this important historic legacy. This commitment means that the Council is able to consider match funding opportunities in the knowledge that future capital receipts are planned in the capital receipts schedule. The adopted AAP has already made arrangements for prioritising community benefits with capital receipts from enabling development directed towards the enhancement of the Park.

- 3.5** Proposals for governance arrangements will be developed through the Council's Capital Delivery Board regarding the specific financing of the projects outlined in the Masterplan. Each individual project with a funding plan would be taken through the Council's capital governance processes and presented to Cabinet for approval. This Cabinet Paper is not seeking approval to the allocation of funding but to the principle of the Masterplan in order to allow the focused development of projects to be commenced.
- 3.6** Given the current financial climate and the changeable nature of available funding streams it is not prudent to set the likely timescales for the delivery of this Masterplan as a whole. However given the establishment of the Community Forum, and the cooperative approach to delivery, the city is in a much better position to take advantages of any opportunities that present themselves.

#### **4.0 CENTRAL PARK AND THE INVESTIGATION INTO A COMMUNITY GREENSPACE TRUST**

- 4.1** Central Park has also been approved by Cabinet to form part of the investigation into a potential Community Greenspace Trust. The investigation will look into the cost, benefits, opportunities and risk of developing a Trust that could take over the management of Central Park. The delivery of the Masterplan and the investigation into the Trust model will be run in parallel.

#### **5.0 DELIVERY OF THE ENHANCEMENTS**

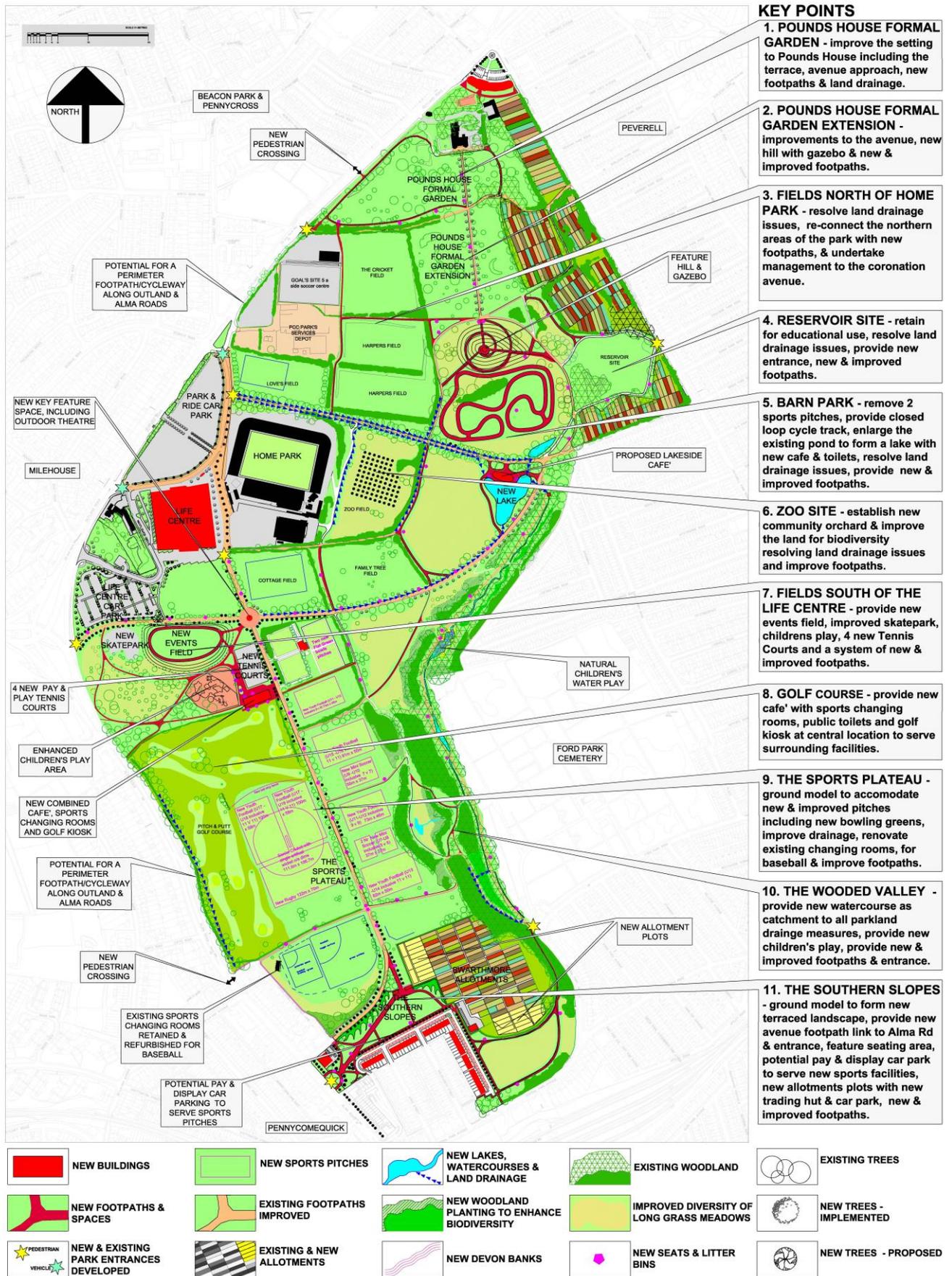
- 5.1** The enhancements indicated within the Masterplan as a whole are fairly extensive and complex and to date it has been challenging to develop a manageable work stream given competing interests, the changeable nature of grant funding and available resources. Given this, the discussion with the Community Forum has focussed upon splitting the Masterplan into a series of prioritised projects. The prioritised projects have been informed by the needs expressed by stakeholders, a review of available and likely funding streams, and the need for a logical sequential approach to the improvements.
- 5.2** The development of a first phase of work is now being prepared and will progress through the Council's projects approval process. If the identified funding bids are successful the City will see the commencement of the following enhancements in the next financial year:
1. The refurbishment of the existing changing rooms at Knolly's Lane, and the facility being dedicated for baseball providing much needed male and female changing facilities;
  2. A first phase of improvements to the sports plateau for Junior Football, Cricket and Rugby for the city. In particular this would be the first step in making Central Park the home of junior football in the city supporting the city's 375 teams and their 4,875 active members;
  3. The delivery of a one kilometre "Closed Loop Cycletrack" which would bring a popular form of competition cycle racing into the park as well as a new attraction for the city;
  4. The delivery of the Community Orchard.

The commencement of the projects detailed above will demonstrate the deliverability of the revised Masterplan and the new cooperative approach to investment as they would include grant funding from British Cycling and Sport England.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1** The City Council has expended a considerable amount of time and effort in the development of Central Park to get it to the point where delivery can commence.
- 6.2** The planning policy framework set out in the Central Park Area Action Plan has provided a clear direction and certainty for developments to take place, including the environmental improvements contained within this Masterplan.
- 6.3** The Masterplan has been revised and refocused with the involvement of the newly formed Community Forum with members committed to the delivery of the benefits it now depicts
- 6.4** The City Council is now in a position to proceed towards the completion of Central Park following its first improvement made 85 years ago following the Hoe and Parks Committee's commissioning of the Mawson Plan in 1928. The implementation will be undertaken with the greatest of care, with a focus on quality, to ensure it benefits the entire City and in a manner that fully engages local communities in the future of the Park.

# APPENDIX 1:



## CENTRAL PARK MASTERPLAN - MARCH 2013