

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: EXECUTIVE

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TRANSFER of SERVICES and FACILITIES to TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide a further update.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the updates regarding the various parks be noted.
- (2) That meetings be arranged as necessary with individual parish and town councils as soon as possible.
- (3) That the desirability of a decision being made at the Council meeting on 26th October on future reductions in the ground maintenance budget for parks be acknowledged.
- (4) That the redirection from the Nelson Committee capital allocation of £4,149 for repair, maintenance and cleaning of the Nelson bus shelters in 2017/18 be approved.
- (5) That discussions now commence with Colne Town Council about the transfer of the Municipal Hall and Colne Market.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To take the programme of transfers forward.

Parks

1. The current position on transfers to and financial support from town and parish councils is as follows.
2. **Barrowford.** The parish council has agreed to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of Barrowford Park. It has also agreed to a transfer of the park together with the freehold of the Heritage Centre with a target date of 1st April 2018. An

initial meeting has been held when it indicated it would wish to pay the Council to continue to do the grounds maintenance for at least the first two years following transfer.

3. It is not willing to contribute to the cost of grounds maintenance of that part of Victoria Park in its area (see below).
4. **Barnoldswick.** The town council has agreed to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of Letcliffe Park, Victory Park and Valley Gardens. It has also agreed to a transfer of the parks with a target date of 1st April 2018. A verbal indication has been given that it would wish to pay the Council to continue to do the grounds maintenance for at least the first two years following transfer.
5. **Nelson.** The town council has agreed to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of Marsden Park, Walverden Park and that part of Victoria Park in its area. It has also agreed in principle to a transfer of the parks with a target date of 1st April 2018. A verbal indication has been given that it would wish to pay the Council to continue to do the grounds maintenance for at least the first two years following transfer.
6. It is not willing to contribute to the cost of grounds maintenance of that part of Victoria Park outside its area (see below). This also presents a complication as regards the transfer of the park which will need to be resolved in upcoming discussions .
7. **Brierfield.** The town council has agreed to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of Heyhead Park. It has given a verbal indication that it will take a transfer of the park though without as yet specifying a target date. A verbal indication has been given that it would wish to continue to pay the Council to continue to do the grounds maintenance if there is a transfer.
8. **Colne.** The town council has agreed in principle to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of Alkincoats Park. It has also agreed “to engage in detailed work on the implications of a transfer of the park”. It is understood it will wish to carry out the grounds maintenance work after 2017/18 itself if there is a transfer.
9. Alongside this it wishes to explore the potential for a transfer of the cemetery. (The Executive has previously requested a detailed report on the implications of the transfer of cemeteries).
10. The Town Council is also seeking “front loading” of the Council’s financial support for grounds maintenance in 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 into one payment to it in April 2018. This will be an issue in upcoming discussions.
11. **Trawden.** The parish council has agreed to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of Ball Grove. It has not as yet given any indication about potential transfer. It may well see transfer of Trawden Recreation ground as the priority. At this point it is assumed it would wish to pay the Council to continue to do the grounds maintenance if there is a transfer.

12. **Earby and Kelbrook and Sough.** It is understood that Earby will make a formal decision on 22nd May to pay the 25% contribution to grounds maintenance in 2017/18 of that part of Sough Park in its area. It has also indicated that at this point it cannot commit to payments in future years or to transfer. At the time of writing the response from Kelbrook and Sough is awaited and an update will be given at the meeting.
13. Individual meetings will be needed starting in June with each of the parish and town councils to firm up intentions and deal with the myriad of practical and legal issues and financial arrangements arising from transfers. This will be a major undertaking and a significant commitment of time.
14. It is likely that the councils will press for a much earlier indication of what will be the Council's future reductions in the parks grounds maintenance budget to aid their future planning. It is suggested that the Council aims to take a decision on this at the Council meeting on 26th October.
15. The Executive needs to consider the position regarding the shortfall in the 25% reduction in 2017/18 relating to Victoria Park.
16. The 25% reduction amounts to £13,045 with the land coverage split between the two areas being 43% Barrowford and 57% Nelson. The reduction in the service levels provided in the Barrowford area therefore amount to £5,600.
17. Work totalling this amount involving reduced gulley cleansing visits, reduced leaf clearance visits, reduced spring and summer bedding provision, reduction in cleansing of steps and paths, reduction in grassed areas having high maintenance cuts and seasonal reductions in bin emptying has been identified and is being implemented.

Future programme

18. The transfer documentation has been provided to Colne Town Council for the transfer of the **Town Hall**. Completion is expected by the end of May.
19. The transfer of **Primet Community Centre** was completed last month.
20. At the last meeting the Executive resolved that it would enter into discussions with the Town Council about the transfer of the **Municipal Hall and Colne Market** early in this financial year if the transfers of the Town Hall and Primet Community Centre had been completed. In the light of the above those discussions can now begin.

Nelson bus shelters

21. As previously reported Nelson Town Council is unwilling to take on responsibility for bus shelters. There is now no budget for their repair and maintenance and cleaning. The options are simply not to undertake any work on them and accept that the Council would just remove them if they become a danger; or for the Executive to re-direct from the Nelson Committee capital allocation the amount required (£4,149 i.e. 39 shelters x £106.38 per annum).

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The transfers of parks and bus shelters are central features of the Council's policy and programme of devolvement of facilities to town and parish councils. The Municipal Hall, Colne Market and cemeteries are potential additions to the programme.

Financial: The budget approved for the current year included a reduction of 25% in the grounds maintenance budget for parks, equivalent to £90,000. On current indications, contributions from Town and Parish Councils will largely offset this, an exception being the shortfall in contributions for Victoria Park. To address this shortfall the level of service will be reduced as outlined in paragraph 17.

Further discussions with the councils will focus on financial arrangements in subsequent years together with the transfer of ownership.

The proposed re-direction from the Nelson Committee capital allocation in 2017/18 will allow routine maintenance, repair and cleansing to be carried out to the Nelson bus shelters. The position for future years will also need to be addressed.

The potential transfer of parks together with assets such as the Municipal Hall and Colne Market represent a significant programme of work, part of which will require more detailed work on the associated financial implications including asset valuations. The outcomes from this work will be reported as appropriate in subsequent updates on these matters.

Legal: None arising from the report.

Risk Management: None arising from the report.

Health and Safety: None arising from the report.

Sustainability: None arising from the report.

Community Safety: None arising from the report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising from the report.

APPENDICES n/a

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS n/a