

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: THURSDAY 7 OCTOBER 2021

TITLE OF REPORT: REFRESHMENTS CONCESSION OPPORTUNITIES AT EDENBROOK AND BRAMSHOT FARM COUNTRY PARKS

Report of: Head of Environment & Technical

Cabinet Portfolio: Leader and Strategic Direction and Partnerships

Key Decision Yes

Confidentiality Non-Exempt

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Head of Environment & Technical Services to market the opportunity to secure a refreshment facility at Edenbrook and Bramshot Farm Country Parks.
- 1.2 At this point no funding is requested for this project; however, depending on response from the market; funding may be requested through the annual budget cycle for 2022-23 on an invest to save basis to develop temporary or permanent trading facilities subject to approval and permissions.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Council, subject to its rules on procurement and Contract Standing Orders, markets the opportunity for the delivery of modest refreshment facilities at both Edenbrook and Bramshot Country Parks.
- 2.2 That the Head of Service for Environment and Technical Services procures a lease of no longer than one year with suitable providers.
- 2.3 That the lease is granted on a commercial basis with the contribution from the lease contributing to savings required as part of the budget setting process.
- 2.4 That any capital or revenue funding associated with this goes through the standard budget setting process and is approved as part of the 2022-23 budget setting process.
- 2.5 That a future report is produced for Cabinet to determine whether the leases are extended beyond the first year of operation.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Edenbrook and Bramshot Country Parks are successful and popular Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Space (SANGs). SANG is the name given to

greenspace that is of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation to offset the impact of new development on the Thames Basins Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). The purpose of SANGs is to provide alternative greenspace to attract visitors away from the SPA.

- 3.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a substantial and potentially sustainable impact with Department for Transport figures reported on 8th October showing that following the initial impact of the pandemic, 39% of people reported to walk more and 38% reported to cycle more than before.
- 3.3 The Council has been approached by visitors and prospective operators who would like to see a refreshments concession at the park. It is anticipated that, initially, this would most likely take the form of a trailer or converted vehicle (with no associated seating area) serving limited refreshments such as teas and coffees.
- 3.4 This report was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 28 September. The committee asked that a number of issues are considered when preparing the specification for the concession, these included
 - Whether there was a the need for toilet facilities,
 - operating hours and
 - the potential for an increase in litter.

Having debated the proposal, the committee supported the initiative and the recommendations to Cabinet.

4 MAIN ISSUES

- 4.1 SANGs are focussed on providing a countryside experience that is attractive to walkers, dog walkers and families. It is recognised that the provision of enhanced facilities in both locations will support the attractiveness of these locations.
- 4.2 If refreshments facilities are provided, they should be modest with all impacts carefully reviewed. It should be recognised that the purpose of the SANGs as habitat migration should not be compromised by additional uses to the country park.
- 4.3 To preserve the character of the country parks and ensure that any refreshment facility is incidental to a visit the following parameters should be used:
 - a) Modest refreshment facility
 - b) Sited in an agreed position around the country park car park
 - c) Initial lease of no more than one year
 - d) Cabinet decision on whether to enter a subsequent lease in future.
- 4.4 Examples of facilities that are being considered for both sites together with plans showing the suggested locations are attached at Appendix A.

- 4.5 An initial lease period of up to one year is proposed. Before any additional term is agreed the impact of introducing refreshments facilities will be reviewed by Cabinet
- 4.6 Factors influencing any future decision are likely to include trends in the number of visitors to the country park, feedback from visitors to the parks, levels of litter and advice from the staff that manage the country parks.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 5.1 The alternative to entering a contract with a supplier was to develop and run the concessions in-house, which may have delivered a higher return to our investment. However, at this stage we do not have the relevant experience to provide this service and would prove to be too risky at this stage.
- 5.2 Fleet Pond was also considered for this provision but was rejected because:
1. Fleet Pond is a Site Special Scientific Interest and so would require special legal consents.
 2. Work on construction of the green corridor linking Fleet Station to Hartland Park is due to commence shortly making the site unsuitable for a concession facility for the next two years.

6.0 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Service Plan

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| Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? | NO |
| Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? | NO |
| Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal? | YES |

6.2 Legal and Constitutional Issues

Implementation of this reports recommendations will be subject to planning permission being granted for the facilities at both sites.

6.3 Financial and Resource Implications

Implementation of this reports recommendations will be subject to any capital or revenue funding being approved as part of the standard budget setting process and is approved as part of the 2022-23 budget setting process. The Council has minimum yield requirements for any commercial investments.

The estimated cost of installing the infrastructure for refreshment facilities at both sites, (inc, the provision of a purpose made unit, construction of hardstanding, water and electricity connections) is £80k.

There is specific VAT rulings in place for trading concessions; a kiosk, stand or concession in a specific site is exempt from VAT if it is non-ambulatory (cannot be moved from place to place). It is standard rated if it has wheels.

6.4 Risk Management

The following risks have been identified should this reports recommendations be approved:

1. Facilities may not prove to be financially viable.
2. An operator may not be identified.

The following risks have been identified should this reports recommendations **not** be approved:

1. A source of potential income for the authority could be missed.
2. An opportunity to enhance the SANG sites would not be realised.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 The facilities provided will be in located at sites that are accessible to people with impaired mobility and will be equally available for anyone within the protected characteristic groups as identified in the Equalities Act 2010.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is believed that the provision of refreshment facilities at the Edenbrook and Bramshot Farm Country Park Sites will make the sites more attractive as a local destination for dog walkers and people looking to enjoy the countryside. It is hoped that his will reduce pressure on local SPAs and avoid unnecessary car journeys.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Approval of the recommendations within this report provides the authority for the Head of Environmental & Technical to market the opportunity for refreshment concessions in line with the conditions noted in this report.

Contact Details: Adam Green, Countryside Manager.

Appendices

| Ref. | Title of Appendix | Exemption Paragraph Number | | | | | | |
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| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| A | Example facility and site location plans | | | | | | | |

Background papers: None