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## **CHERRY ORCHARD JUBILEE PARK UPDATE**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the works at the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and also give details of the grants that have successfully been obtained.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Permission was gained from Essex County Council to access the land in order to carry out urgent weed control work back in November 2001.
- 2.2 Following this, the appropriate further permission was obtained to carry out all the works required for the creation of the Country Park whilst the legal formalities related to the transfer of the land were finalised. This work commenced in February 2002.

### **3 WORKS UNDERTAKEN**

- 3.1 Since February, a range of works have been carried out under the management of the Council's Woodlands and Environmental Officer, Mr. McKenna. This has involved writing specifications, obtaining tenders, site visits, in addition to our own staff carrying out some of the works and general site supervision.
- 3.2 At this present moment in time the following works have all been completed:-
- All tree planting – approximately 28,000 trees.
  - Various ground preparation works.
  - Vegetation was cut back along the stream.
  - Bat survey, water vole survey, tree condition survey (and associated works that were identified).
  - Land level survey in relation to the future construction of the lake.
- 3.3 Due to the fact that the Council's Woodlands and Environmental Officer is co-ordinating and managing this project, it was agreed to provide some backfill resources on a temporary basis to ensure that some of his other work and responsibilities continue. The temporary administrative assistant is now in place but it has not been possible to as yet to recruit a temporary Arboricultural Officer. However, in order to carry out the large number of site visits / tree preservation order enquiries that this post would have covered, we have employed Essex

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Tree Services to temporarily carry out this function. At present this arrangement is working effectively and the number of outstanding enquiries are very low.

#### **4 FUTURE WORKS**

4.1 Tenders have been obtained for the extensive fencing works that are required on the site, with this due to commence very shortly.

4.2 There are still many other works that need to be undertaken on the site for which the Woodlands and Environmental Officer is currently putting together specifications and work programmes. These are detailed below:-

- Lake construction – bore hole samples to be taken.
- Engineer drawing, specification written and tenders sought for the lake construction (works aimed to be undertaken during summer and autumn 2002).
- Further ground preparation works to smooth and contour the land.
- Creation of the arboretum.
- Bridleway construction – tenders just received and due to meet the Essex County Council who are responsible for this item.
- Creation of the orchard.
- Information boards located around the site.

#### **5 GRANTS**

5.1 There has been considerable success in obtaining significant funding via various grants that have been awarded specifically for this project.

5.2 The application for funding from the Forestry Authority's Jigsaw grant scheme has been successful and a cheque for £102,000 has now been received. To qualify for this grant, a number of works have to be carried out, primarily the tree planting and fencing. The Forestry Authority have already inspected the site and were happy to release the monies on the basis of the progress made.

5.3 The works being carried out will also qualify the project for monies from the Farm Woodland Premiership Scheme. This will be £300 per hectare per year for 15 years (12 hectares) with the first payment of approximately £3,600 due in November 2002.

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5.4 The Council has also recently been awarded a further £50,000 from the Thames Gateway for the Country Park. This is specifically in relation to the lake construction, arboretum and orchard and must be spent this financial year.

5.5 Finally, once the Country Park is opened to the public, it will qualify for a Community Woodland Supplement grant. This will be a one-off payment of £950 per hectare (approximately £11,400).

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The provision of a Country Park in this area will provide a permanent green barrier between the District and Southend-on-Sea. It will also provide a natural habitat, together with a valuable facility for residents of the area.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The costs incurred for implementing the various works detailed in this report can be met from capital budgets previously designated for this project in addition to the significant amount of grant funding that has been obtained.

## **8 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 It is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report, in particular the progress being made in the creation of the County Park and the external funding that has been awarded.(CD(FES))

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