

MINUTE

of

DAMS TO DARNLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, East Renfrewshire Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock, on 28 October 2013.

Present:

Councillor Charlie Gilbert (Chair)
Councillor Bill Butler (Vice Chair)

Councillor Rashid Hussain
Councillor Paul O'Kane

Attending:

Julie Nicol, Principal Planning Officer, East Renfrewshire Council; Stephen McHenry, Country Park Project Officer, East Renfrewshire Council; Fiona Campbell, Development and Regeneration Services Planner, Glasgow City Council; Pete Miller, Team Leader, Land Services, Glasgow City Council; John Shevlin, Account Manager, Glasgow City Council; and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer, East Renfrewshire Council.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2. The joint committee considered and approved the Minute of the meeting of 2 September 2013.

COUNTRY PARK ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT 2012/13

3. The joint committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Financial Services and Deputy Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council, presenting the Dams to Darnley Country Park Annual Accounts 2012/13 for approval and the Annual Report on the 2012/13 Audit for noting. Copies of both the Annual Accounts and the Annual Audit Report accompanied the report.

The Account Manager explained that the Country Park accounts for the financial year 2012/13 had been completed and had been audited by Audit Scotland under the terms of Section 106 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The accounts had received an unqualified audit certificate.

The Account Manager highlighted the remaining reserve of £75,122 and explained that, with forecast expenditure in the region of £73,000 in 2013/14, the reserve would effectively exhaust in March 2014 if steps were not taken to seek additional funding.

He went on to explain that Audit Scotland had highlighted the urgent need for the joint committee to agree on a way forward to address the expected funding shortfall. It had also been noted that budget monitoring statements had not been regularly reported to the joint committee and that, given the current uncertainties over financing, performance against the 2013/14 budget required to be closely monitored and reported on a regular basis.

Having heard the Account Manager explain that further information relating to future funding would be presented later in the meeting and that it was his intention to present quarterly reports to the joint committee in future, the joint committee agreed to:-

- (a) approve the Dams to Darnley Country Park Annual Accounts 2012/13; and
- (b) note the Annual Report on the 2012/13 Audit.

COUNTRY PARK BUDGET 2013/14 AND MONITORING REPORT

4. The joint committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Financial Services and Deputy Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council, presenting the Dams to Darnley Country Park budget for 2013/14 and the quarterly monitoring report for the period ending 13 September 2013.

The Account Manager explained that there were no significant variances against budget to report; that total expenditure to date was £28,340 against a budget of £27,321; and that it was forecast that probable spend for the financial year would be in line with the budget. He went on to explain that the balance of the developers' fund was forecast to fall to under £3,000 in line with the legal agreements between Glasgow City Council and the developers that secured the funding and required the fund to be spent in full by March 2015.

Having heard the Account Manager explain that he would consult with appropriate officers from East Renfrewshire Council with a view to arranging for quarterly invoicing to better inform future monitoring reports, the joint committee agreed to:-

- (a) approve the Country Park budget for 2013/14; and
- (b) note the monitoring report.

Resolution to Exclude Press and Public

At this point in the meeting, on the motion of the Chair, the committee unanimously resolved that in accordance with the provisions of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

COUNTRY PARK FUTURE FUNDING

5. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 2 September 2013 (Item 4 refers) when it had been agreed that Councillors Butler and Hussain would have further urgent discussions with both the political administration and senior officers of Glasgow City Council to seek financial support from the Council for the Country Park project beyond 2013/14, the

joint committee considered a statement by the Executive Director of Financial Services and Deputy Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council, reiterating Glasgow City Council's continuing support for the Country Park and confirming its intention to contribute up to £70,000 towards staff costs and expenses for the financial year 2014/15.

Commenting on the statement, Councillor Butler highlighted the need for park managers across the UK to consider how necessary savings could be achieved and how communities could be offered a greater role in managing assets such as the Country Park in a fashion that employed appropriate alternative service delivery models. He went on to highlight the unique ability of "Friends of" parks groups across the country to drive forward substantial and sustainable change within their local parks in partnership with local authorities, an ability recognised by funding bodies such as The Big Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland as evidenced by the significant role they played in respect of their input to local park steering groups.

Councillor Butler concluded by highlighting the urgency of finalising the draft Country Park Business and Delivery Options Plan with the aim of establishing a country park that was both environmentally and financially sustainable and working towards the objective of increasing sources of external income and reducing both councils' future funding allocations.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane express his appreciation to colleagues from Glasgow City Council for the work done since the previous meeting to secure ongoing funding and having heard the Principal Planning Officer suggest that, due to the late notification of the statement, officers would require time to fully consider the possible implications of the statement and report back any concerns, the joint committee agreed to note the statement.

COUNTRY PARK BUSINESS AND DELIVERY OPTIONS PLAN

6. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 2 September 2013 (Item 4 refers) when it had been agreed to defer consideration of the report on the proposed Business and Delivery Options Plan until the next meeting in anticipation of receipt of the report by Dunira Strategy Limited, the joint committee considered a report by the Director of Environment, East Renfrewshire Council, providing an update on the development of the plan in order to assist with further consideration of the future options for the country park.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the report by Dunira Strategy Limited had still not been received and that consequently there was little new information to report but that it was anticipated that the final report would be submitted to East Renfrewshire Council prior to the next meeting of the joint committee.

The Country Park Project Officer reiterated that the draft plan had identified a number of relatively small scale revenue generating opportunities in the short term which, if successful, could generate in the region of £20,000 before costs. This income would still be insufficient to meet Glasgow City Council's (GCC) share of revenue contributions beyond summer 2014. The draft plan had also identified two alternative mechanisms by which current maintenance costs associated with GCC's land could be reduced or eliminated and the Project Officer advised that discussions would continue in this regard. The plan had also identified longer term revenue generating opportunities relating to a proposed watersports hub, visitor centre and environmental education base and potential locations, estimated capital costs and revenue generating potential associated with each opportunity.

The Project Officer further explained that the recent joint declaration of the Dams to Darnley Local Nature Reserve (LNR) offered the greatest potential for community involvement within the development and management of the Country Park. In responding to a query from

Councillor Butler the Project Officer advised that he hoped that the draft Business and Delivery Options Plan would be completed within the next 6 and 8 weeks but that this was dependent upon receipt of the Dunira Strategy Limited report which would be the subject of internal management discussion within East Renfrewshire Council.

Following some discussion, in the course of which the Principal Planning Officer confirmed that officers from GCC would be consulted on the Business and Delivery Options Plan prior to a final report being brought to the joint committee for consideration, the joint committee agreed to note the position.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7. The Joint Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Monday 2 December 2013 at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, East Renfrewshire Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park.

CHAIR