

MINUTE

of

DAMS TO DARNLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Committee Room, East Renfrewshire Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock on 9 December 2015.

Present:

Councillor Rashid Hussain (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Charlie Gilbert

Councillor Hussain in the Chair

Apology:

Councillor Bill Butler.

Attending:

Julie Nicol, Principal Planning Officer, East Renfrewshire Council; Pete Miller, Landscape Design and Development Manager, Glasgow City Council; John Shevlin, Account Manager, Glasgow City Council; Stephen McHenry, Country Park Project Officer, East Renfrewshire 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 held on 23 September 2015.

COUNTRY PARK COUNTRYSIDE RANGER SERVICE UPDATE

3. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Director of Environment, East Renfrewshire Council, updating the Joint Committee on the work of the Country Park Countryside Ranger Service.

The Project Officer explained that the report focussed on Countryside Ranger led events and volunteer activities including visits by pupils to the Country Park and visits to schools by the Countryside Rangers. In total 242 pupils had participated in activities during the period of the report. Senior pupils from Barrhead High School had helped the Countryside Rangers as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award including with tidying up path entrances and planting

hedgerows. In addition, six Country Park events had been held attracting 80 participants including a successful bat walk held at Balgray Reservoir for the first time and the ever popular Halloween event. A further 362 people had taken part in 22 Country Park community activities including volunteer days which had resulted in almost 200 hours of time being given towards the improvement of the park.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

COUNTRY PARK PROJECT OFFICER UPDATE

4. The Country Park Project Officer provided an oral update on the progress of various projects affecting the Country Park. He advised that Scottish Water Board had given their support for the development of the Wake Park at Balgray Reservoir and had instructed staff to work with East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) to move the project forward with particular emphasis on the completion of a risk assessment. This was regarded as very positive progress which would, it was hoped, lead to the appointment of a design team and preferred operator early in 2016 with a view to the Wake Park becoming operational in 2017.

He went on to explain that design work would also be getting underway in relation to the realignment of Aurs Road. It was planned that the northern section to be realigned would create space for a new Country Park visitor centre, whilst the southern section would enable the creation of safe access from Newton Mearns to Balgray Reservoir. This new path would link in with other improvements being planned in respect of creating new access routes and a proposed boardwalk. Improved access to the Country Park would also be delivered as part of the development of Barrhead South.

It was further reported that path improvements in the Darnley Mill area were currently being planned as a result of the award of more than £7,000 of funding from the Greater Pollok Area Forum. This work was expected to be completed by the end of March 2016.

The Project Officer concluded his report by distributing copies of the Country Park Events Calendar for 2016 which would be available in libraries, sports centres and other Council buildings.

The Joint Committee noted the update.

COUNTRY PARK GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

5. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 23 September 2015 (Item 5 refers), when it was agreed that further information on the proposal to draw up a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the two Councils as an alternative means of managing the Country Park as opposed to the Joint Committee, the Principal Planning Officer explained that ERC Legal Services team had started to draft an outline SLA and that a report on the proposal to dissolve the Joint Committee and replace it with an SLA was due to be presented to the next meeting of the Council on 16 December for approval. Officers from Glasgow City Council (GCC) were currently considering the appropriate administrative procedure to enable GCC to consider the proposal.

She went on to explain that the SLA would set out the proposed management structure and thereafter the reinvigorated officer steering group would deal with day to day management of the project. Elected Members of both councils would continue to receive formal updates on a regular basis with updates for residents and visitors being published on the Country Park's website and in the Wagtail magazine which would continue to be published.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

COUNTRY PARK ANNUAL ACCOUNTS PROCEDURE FROM 2015/16

6. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Financial Services, GCC, setting out proposals to enable the committee to comply with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulation 2014 by means of the delegation to the Chair of the Joint Committee to consider the unaudited accounts prior to their submission to the Appointed Auditor prior to 30 June each year.

The Account Manager briefly explained the background to the proposals which would require the unaudited accounts to be signed off by the Chair of the Joint Committee by 30 June each year prior to their submission to the auditor.

Referring to the proposed new governance arrangements which had been discussed under the previous agenda item, the Account Manager questioned who would be responsible for signing off the unaudited accounts at the end of June 2016 and the audited accounts at the end of September 2016, in the event that the proposal to wind up the Joint Committee was approved by both councils. The suggestion was made that it may be necessary to consider retaining the Joint Committee in tandem with the SLA, albeit with a reduced remit, until 30 September 2016 by which time revised financial arrangements to be introduced as part of the proposed SLA would be agreed and implemented by the officer steering group.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that the officer steering group was aware of the situation and details of the future financial arrangements would be clarified as the negotiations proceeded. She concluded by explaining that the 2016/17 budget would require to be approved by both councils following the setting of their overall budgets in February 2016.

The Joint Committee agreed, subject to satisfactory conclusion of negotiations and approval of the proposed new governance arrangements as outlined in Item 5 above:-

- (a) to approve that authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the Director of Environment, East Renfrewshire Council, to consider the unaudited accounts prior to their submission to the Appointed Auditor by 30 June 2016 and the audited accounts by 30 September 2016; and
- (b) to implement the delegation in relation to the 2015/16 annual accounts process only.

COUNTRY PARK QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT 2015/16

7. The Joint Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Financial Services, GCC, setting out the budget for 2015/16 and the actual spend to date against the budget for the period to 6 November 2015.

The Account Manager explained that there was an underspend on salary costs due to a staff vacancy and that as a result the forecast was that probable spend for the financial year would be slightly lower than budget. He went on to explain that the revenue running costs budget was £145k mainly comprising the staff costs of the Countryside Rangers, the Project Officer, other running costs and the audit fee. The income budget had been adjusted to reflect the contribution of £7,193 from the Greater Pollok Area Forum towards the cost of the Darnley Mill project; the contribution of £56k from ERC; the contribution of £70k from GCC;

and £12k of developer contributions carried forward from previous years. The sum of £40k had been secured through an ERC capital allocation and priorities to use this were being considered. In addition, it was anticipated that significant additional capital funding would be allocated to the Country Park through the Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal project and future developer contributions.

The Joint Committee agreed to approve the second quarterly monitoring report for 2015/16.

CHAIR