

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

16 December 2015

Report by Director of Environment

DAMS TO DARNLEY COUNTRY PARK GOVERNANCE

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for proposed changes to the governance arrangements in relation to Dams to Darnley Country Park.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Council:
- a) Approve the proposed dissolution of the existing Dams to Darnley Joint Committee and the establishment of a Service Level Agreement; and
  - b) Agree that a revised Minute of Agreement be produced

**BACKGROUND AND REPORT**

3. Since 2004 East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils have worked in partnership to develop and manage Dams to Darnley Country Park. The Country Park sits in the greenspace separating Barrhead, Darnley and Newton Mearns. Within East Renfrewshire, the Country Park forms part of the green network as identified in the adopted Local Development Plan.

4. A Minute of Agreement was put in place in 2006 and sets out the governance arrangements for the project, the keys aspects of which are as follows;

- a Joint Committee which meets quarterly and comprises 2 elected members from East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils (currently Councillors O’Kane (Chair) and Gilbert), with the option for co-opted members;
- East Renfrewshire Council is the employing authority for project staff;
- East Renfrewshire Council provides Committee Clerk support;
- Glasgow City Council acts as treasurer.

5. Whilst much work has been undertaken across the Country Park by both Councils in recent years, the main focus in terms of future capital investment in the Park will be within East Renfrewshire. Investment proposals have been developed in consultation with Glasgow City Council and are aimed at increasing visitor numbers through the provision of new visitor facilities, improved accessibility and a range of recreational and environmental opportunities.

6. Future proposals including a Wake Park, visitor centre, Aurs Road straightening, Balgray boardwalk and a new rail station, all of which could be implemented over the next 10 years and funded through City Deal, development contributions and external funding.

7. Given that the balance of park development activity is now anticipated to be largely within East Renfrewshire, it is considered by both Councils that a Joint Committee is no longer the most effective nor efficient mechanism to manage the project and that a more appropriate way forward would be by means of a Service Level Agreement between the two Councils. This arrangement would remove the need to provide the administrative support to service the Joint Committee and would improve efficiency by allowing staff to focus instead on project development and delivery.

8 The introduction of a Service Level Agreement would allow the project to be managed by both Councils through an officer Steering Group with the dissolution of the Joint Committee. Dams to Darnley Country Park would continue to operate as at present and project staff would continue to be employed by East Renfrewshire Council.

9. If the recommendations are approved, an officer Steering Group would then be set up to direct the work of project staff and set priorities. It would comprise East Renfrewshire Council and Glasgow City Council officers, the Dams to Darnley Project Manager and the 2 Countryside Rangers.

10. The officer Steering Group would meet quarterly or as required, and continue to engage with Elected Members, relevant community groups and key agencies to ensure ongoing engagement with specific projects. Project information would continue to be circulated by means of regular newsletters, updates on the website, etc.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

11. The proposed change of governance will remove the need for administrative support to service the Joint Committee. Efficiency will be improved as this will allow staff to focus upon project development and delivery.

## **CONSULTATION**

12. The Dams to Darnley Joint Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2015 agreed to the development of proposals to introduce a Service Level Agreement for the Country Park and agreed, in principle, to the dissolution of the Country Park Joint Committee. This was subject to further information on progress being reported to a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

13. The proposals within this report have been developed jointly with Glasgow City Council, as Dams to Darnley project partners.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

14. The proposed replacement of the Dams to Darnley Joint Committee with a Service Level Agreement will improve efficiency and allow officers to focus on project development and delivery. There are no other staffing, IT, sustainability or other implications associated with this report.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

15. Given that future park development activity will be largely within East Renfrewshire, it is considered that a Joint Committee is no longer the most effective and efficient mechanism to manage the Country Park and that instead a Service Level Agreement should be put in place between the two Councils.

16. The introduction of a Service Level Agreement would allow the project to be managed by both Councils through an officer Steering Group which would consult with other key stakeholders as required.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

17. It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Approve the proposed dissolution of the existing Dams to Darnley Joint Committee and the establishment of a Service Level Agreement; and
- b) Agree that a revised Minute of Agreement be produced

Director of Environment

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## **KEY WORDS:**

A report seeking Council approval to disband the Dams to Darnley Joint Committee and enter into a Service Level Agreement with Glasgow City Council. Dams to Darnley Country Park, Joint Committee, Service Level Agreement, Governance