



**WILLENHALL LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD
PARTNERSHIP**

20 JANUARY 2005

**AGENDA
ITEM:**

TRANSFORMING YOUR SPACE PROGRAMME

Ward(s): Willenhall Local Neighbourhood Partnership boundary area.

Portfolio: Councillor A. Andrew

Service Area: Urban Regeneration

Summary of Report:

This report provides an update on the TYS schemes in the Willenhall LNP area and provides details of the alternative scheme for the Coppice Farm proposal.

Background Papers:

Transforming Your Space Programme Cabinet Report – 16th October 2002.
Transforming Your Space Programme Cabinet Report – 08th September 2004.
Transforming Your Space Willenhall LNP Report - 18th October 2004

Recommendations

- To note details of the report.
- To endorse the alternative scheme for Coppice Farm.

Resource and Legal Considerations

Transforming Your Space is a Big Lottery Fund grant of £1,748,294. With match funding, the programme totals approximately £2.7 million.

There are no known legal considerations, other than the sealing of individual contracts exceeding £100,000.

Citizen Impact

The TYS programme will have a borough wide impact and will benefit a broad range of Walsall's population. In particular, young people will directly benefit through access to improved play and recreational facilities.

Environment Impact

The programme includes environmental improvement projects and improvements to play and youth facilities, therefore there will be a positive impact on the environment.

Performance Management and Risk Management Issues

The TYS programme contributes to the Environmental Regeneration Service objective to "developing and delivering a range of environmental regeneration initiatives which improve the quality of life for people in the borough."

Risk Management Issues:

Risk

Failure to obtain the LNP's endorsement for a scheme at Hawthorne Road: This risk is considered to be low due to the close work carried out with the LNP's task group set up to look at TYS schemes in the area.

Equality Implications

The TYS programme will have a borough wide impact, ensuring that every part of Walsall sees some form of activity.

The processes used to identify the TYS projects have been scrutinised by the borough's Community Empowerment Network (CEN).

Consultation

To date the programme has been developed in consultation with local communities, the LSP (in particular the Housing and Environment Theme Group), the borough CEN, Friend of Parks groups and all the former District Committees. These and other groups

will continue to play an important part in the programme.

Vision 2008

The programme will contribute to the following Council Priorities, identified in Vision 2008:

- Ensure a clean & green borough
- Ensure all people are safe & secure
- Make Walsall a healthy and caring place
- Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall
- Make it easier to access local services
- Listen to what people want

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Willenhall LNP on progress made on TYS schemes in their area.
- 1.2 To provide details on maintenance arrangements for sites benefiting from TYS funding.
- 1.3 To provide details of the alternative site identified (as agreed by the LNP's task group) for Coppice Farm and seek the LNP's endorsement for this preferred option.

2. MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 In a letter dated 11 August 2003 The Group Coordinator, Sport, Recreation and Outdoor Amenities, confirmed that Leisure and Community Services have agreed to cover the additional costs for maintenance of TYS Strand 2 Play and Youth Proposals, including Willenhall District Project.
- 2.2 The proposals will enhance existing play areas and in many cases will result in reduced costs for maintenance. Where there are additional maintenance costs it is understood that these will be met from existing revenue budgets and from efficiency savings from the realignment of existing structures. However it is recognised that daily wear and tear and an element of vandalism will inevitably occur.
- 2.3 The Lifelong Learning and Community Department are attempting to mitigate the effects of vandalism and daily wear and tear through a number of initiatives which will help ensure that the new facilities are looked after:
 - The Council are looking to invest in new ways of identifying faults with equipment so that they can be rectified at the earliest opportunity rather than left to deteriorate.
 - A new e-mail address, to be widely publicised, will allow members of the public to report faults; enabling a quick response to problems.
 - The 'play safety team' who are responsible for the inspection and repair of play facilities has been depleted in recent years due to staff turn over. However, the Authority is now looking to employ more staff to this team.
 - The Play Areas Manager has been involved in the selection of play equipment to ensure that the most robust materials are selected to guarantee longevity.

3. PROJECT UPDATE

- 3.1 Harlech Road Open Space, Play and Youth Proposals
 - 3.1.1 Consultations to date have yielded 17 replies from questionnaires. 9 people agree with the proposals, 4 don't agree and 4 don't know. Notwithstanding the fact that nearly half of the respondents do not clearly support the proposals no adverse comments have yet been received about the scheme. Additional consultations to be carried out during January 2005 should help to test levels of support further.

3.2 Hartill Street Open Space

- 3.2.1 To date 17 replies to questionnaires have been received. 13 people agree with the proposals, 2 don't agree and 2 don't know. Although a majority of people support the proposals, there are concerns about access, safety and the condition of the site entrance.
- 3.2.2 Through the consultation process a proposal has been put forward by youth workers at Rosehill Community Centre to install an outdoor 'caged' mini-football area on Council-owned land to the rear of the Community Centre. Lifelong Learning and Community officers are currently investigating the feasibility of such a scheme and the estimated cost, which would need to be met from sources other than TYS.

3.3 Manor Farm Open Space

- 3.3.1 At a special meeting of the Manor Farm Willenhall Residents Association, on 30 November 2004, 23 young people from the estate put forward their views on the TYS proposals. The older children made strong demands for a youth club on the estate – this request is being explored by the District Youth Worker. They also indicated that they preferred to have the existing multi-use games area hard surfaced rather than fenced and gated. The Residents Association has also assisted in distributing questionnaires across the estate. 17 replies have been received so far. 9 people agree with the proposals, 4 don't agree and 4 don't know. Of the people that don't agree, 2 local residents have expressed strong concerns about an increase in nuisance from the football pitch and the effect the increased use will have on their lives. The feasibility of relocating the football pitch to the site of the vandalised play area is being investigated by officers in response to these concerns.
- 3.3.2 Due to the number of issues that are associated with the site and have arisen during the on-going consultation process it is likely that a phased approach to future improvements on the open space will be required, alongside improvements to youth provision, with TYS proving to be the catalyst for this process.

3.4 Willenhall Memorial Park, Play and Youth Proposals

- 3.4.1 36 replies have been received for this site. 25 people agree with the proposals, 2 don't agree and 9 don't know. Although the proposals are well supported, many people are concerned about vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the park, and several have commented that whatever is put in the park will be vandalised. Additionally, some people say they are frightened to go in the park.
- 3.4.2 Improvements to skate provision, events areas and children's play equipment are widely supported so far. Other suggestions have been put forward, for example a BMX track and a new lido. However there are uncertainties over the best location for a youth shelter, the form it should take and whether or not it will become a drugs den.

3.5 Coppice Farm

- 3.5.1 The issues surrounding Coppice Farm are discussed in detail in section 4.

3.6 Gomer Street

3.6.1 As reported to the LNP in October 2004, the site identified for improvements on Gomer Street is in private ownership and the TYS proposal could only be implemented if the land was gifted at nil consideration. Contact with the owners of the land has been made on numerous occasions; unfortunately their latest correspondence means that the proposed scheme cannot proceed as they are looking for remuneration for the site. In October the LNP agreed that in this scenario the funding for the Gomer Street scheme should be diverted to improvements at Willenhall Memorial Park.

3.7 Project Timescales

3.7.1 The detailed consultation for the Willenhall District Project so far, in particular the issues surrounding Coppice farm (discussed below), has resulted in the need to extend the timescale for completing community consultation. Therefore the project is now anticipated to be on site in September 2005. However, it is envisaged that this short delay will result in both better and community owned schemes.

3.7.2 As stated in the TYS report to the LNP in October 2004, the Gomer Street proposal had been packaged with schemes in the Darlaston District Project, due to Big Lottery Fund conditions the replacement scheme will have to remain within this project which is still anticipated to be on site in summer 2005.

4. **ALTERNATIVE SCHEME TO COPPICE FARM**

4.1 At its meeting on 1st December 2004, the LNP task group established to look at the TYS schemes agreed that because of the wider issues surrounding the Coppice Farm site it was best looked at outside the TYS programme. The group also concluded that the LNP's Lead Officers should identify steps to resolve the issues surrounding Coppice Farm.

4.2 The task group concluded that the following sites should be investigated as possible alternative schemes for the TYS programme:

- Pennine Way
- Ullswater Water Road
- Hawthorne Road (Short Heath Playing Fields)

4.2.1 Pennine Way

4.2.1.1 The former play area near Pennine way was removed due to its poor condition. The area surrounding the site, formerly high rise tower blocks, has now been cleared and is likely to be redeveloped as housing. The site of the old play area is now in the ownership of Walsall Housing Group (WHG). For these reasons it is proposed that any play area at this site is explored through a s.106 agreement with the housing developer and located in an appropriate location once detailed design for the redevelopment of the site has been undertaken.

4.2.2 Ullswater Road

4.2.2.1 Following the site visit to Ullswater Road the facility was considered to be in fair condition and therefore not in need of improvement.

4.2.3 Hawthorne Road

4.2.3.1 The Hawthorne Road site is a large open space which includes some semi-derelict play equipment and natural hedged boundary. Of the sites looked at this presents the most opportunity and is in most need of refurbishment.

4.2.3.2 The size and nature of the site will allow for improvements to provide a better play area or a youth focussed facility. However as both present implications on cost, it will not be possible to provide both types of improvements via TYS. But it may be possible to enhance the facility provided at a later date. A budget of £26,000 is available for the site however this will only facilitate a fairly limited improvement. Officers are currently working to identify alternative funding that may be attracted to support the implementation of a more comprehensive redevelopment of the existing facility. This includes discussions with Walsall Housing Trust who have indicated that subject to further detailed discussion they may be willing to consider part funding a facility at Hawthorne Road. The nature of the completed scheme will be determined by the amount of secured funding available.

4.2.3.3 Subject to the LNP agreeing to explore opportunities to develop a TYS project at Hawthorne Road, it is proposed that the details of the scheme are determined by consultation which will be undertaken in the following months with local residents.

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

5.1 Risk - Failure to obtain the LNP's endorsement for a scheme at Hawthorne Road: This risk is considered to be low due to the close work carried out with the LNP's task group set up to look at TYS schemes in the area.

6. **SUMMARY**

6.1 The implementation of the proposed TYS schemes will represent some key improvements for the LNP and will contribute to improving people's quality of life.

In summary, Willenhall LNP is asked to:-

- note details of the report, and
- endorse the alternative scheme for Coppice Farm.