

Grange Meadow Access Track & Car Park Renewal Procurement Update

Community Services Committee Thursday, 16 June 2022

Report of: Executive Head of Communities

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: Bletchingley & Nutfield

Executive summary:

This is an update on the plans for the renewal of the access track at Grange Meadow Recreation Ground, Bletchingley.

This report requests that Committee delegate authority to the Executive Head of Communities to tender for these works that are expected to be in excess of £169,000 and appoint the most suitable contractor.

This report supports the Council's priority of:

Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need
Becoming a greener, more sustainable council

Contact officer Jason Thomas Asset Management Specialist
jthomas2@tandridge.gov.uk –

Recommendation to Committee:

That Committee note the unforeseen delays to this project and delegate authority to the Executive Head for Communities to approve a contract subject to budget, normal procurement procedures and the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

Reason for recommendation:

Improvements are required to the surface quality and drainage of the access track and car park at Grange Meadow Recreation Ground, Bletchingley.

The current track that leads to an informal car parking area is constructed of type 1 loose gravel. The proposal is designed to improve access and parking provision for all users of Grange Meadow. These improvements are also included within the Action Plan of the Open Space Strategy, thereby supporting the aim of improving access to sports and recreation activities to all residents.

Introduction and background

1. The project was rejected for CIL funding on 24th November 2020. The minutes stated, *'While not disputing the need for the scheme, reservations about the proposal included a view that the works should be funded from the Council's capital programme (given that the Council owned the site)...'*
2. Committee agreed the provision of £250,000 within the capital budget 2021-22 to fund this project on 18th January 2021. The amount has been carried forward to the current financial year due to the previous delays. Surrey County Council has previously agreed to fund £10,000 of drainage improvements to the car park area.
3. The Council previously carried out a tender exercise that closed on 10th December 2021. Unfortunately, it was unable to make an award on that occasion due to the received tenders being over budget (£522,000 and £412,000 respectively).
4. Officers have since asked our consultants to make cost savings by revising the materials and including the reuse of spoil onsite. The revisions and original returns have been reviewed by a cost consultant and are expected to come in at or near to the original budget of £250,000.
5. The recreation ground is used by the general public for ad hoc recreation as well as organised activities through the Grange Meadow CIC, Bletchingley Rifle Club, Model Car Club, AELFA Arts Academy and Bletchingley Bowls Club. There is also a popular children's play area and adult outdoor gym. The skate park has recently been removed due to disrepair issues, however Officers are committed to providing a new facility for residents in the near future.

Condition of the Access Track and Car Park

6. The access track at Grange Meadow has deteriorated in recent years. The surface of compacted type 1 hardcore which requires regular maintenance and topping up. This constant topping up of the surface has now covered the existing speed humps, therefore exposing the track and car park to instances of anti-social driving. The capacity of the track and informal car park to accommodate all users is currently limited owing to the poor condition of the

surfaces and lack of drainage. There are often days when several user groups require access simultaneously, and during village events when existing capacity is inadequate.

The Proposed Scheme

7. The proposed scheme will use a low maintenance Grasscrete-type surface with a tanked permeable paving system for the main part of the track. For the car park area, it is proposed to formalise the parking arrangements over a fully permeable grasscrete-type surface. Officers will also be exploring improvements for disabled access and additional tree planting to improve permeability in the car park.
8. The proposed new access track is being designed to improve drainage capacity and alleviate flooding through the use of permeable surfaces. The surface water will be collected via a perforated pipe which will discharge into the existing gully near to the A25. Therefore, improving local surface drainage to both Grange Meadow and at the intersection with the A25. The revised scheme also reduces costs and improves surface water drainage by re-using waste to create new earth bunds to further alleviate flood risk. The scheme will also reinstate speed humps along the access track, to reduce vehicle speeds.

Support for the Improvements

9. The project has support from Ward Members, Bletchingley Parish Council, Grange Meadow CIC (formerly Grange Meadow Sports Association) and Surrey County Council Flood Alleviation Team.
10. The track will improve access to the sports and recreational facilities that exist at Grange Meadow, which will in turn, improve the health outcomes of local people (physical and mental health and wellbeing).

Other Options Considered

11. The do-nothing option is not a viable solution. The condition of the existing track limits access to the Recreation Ground, particularly in wet weather conditions when pot holes develop due to the poor surface condition and lack of adequate drainage. This in turn limits the size and scope of activities that can take place.
12. Historic re-topping of the surface has proved completely unsatisfactory. The lack of formally marked parking bays has caused capacity and safety issues that cause severe inconvenience and frustration for all users.
13. The new surface will help to alleviate these issues including adding new speeds hump to reduce anti-social driving and clearly marked parking bays to formalize parking and improve disabled access.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

The recommendations in this report should enable officers to deliver the scheme in line with the approved capital budget. Reviewing the scope of the scheme to ensure that it is deliverable within budget is necessary given the wider context of increased costs in the construction industry. Any increases to scheme costs, unless funded externally, will add to borrowing costs at a time when the revenue budget is under significant pressure. This is likely to be exacerbated by further reductions in funding from 2023/24 onwards.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

There are no specific legal issues arising directly from this report, however good forward planning will ensure that procurement activity is done in a timely way, which will lead to better value for money. Notably, that delays to procurements may see price increases, particularly at times of high inflation. As well as compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders (internal procurement rules), the Council must ensure compliance with procurement law. The Procurement Board also has sight of all major procurements of the Council.

Equality

The improvements will improve access for all users.

Climate change

The improved drainage provided by this project will reduce surface water flooding incidents.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None

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