



LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY MEETING
19 OCTOBER 2017 AT 14:00

Agenda Item No:

5

Report No:

A/4248/17

2017/18 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Presented by the Chief Executive

SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an overview of the Authority's 2017/18 performance to date.

A proposed work programme for 2017/18 was presented to the Authority meeting in April.

RECOMMENDATION

Members Note: (1) the report.

BACKGROUND

- 1 The priority areas of work reflect the key themes of the 2016/17-2018/19 business plan:
 - a) increase income from existing venues/sites through a range of investment opportunities both directly and with or via 3rd parties and pursue the generation of commercial income through Authority owned land and property assets;
 - b) improve the accessibility of Lee Valley Regional Park to its regional constituency through marketing and community engagement initiatives;
 - c) continue to develop new operational models for its services as the Authority moves to being more of an enabling organisation;
 - d) enhance the Regional Park's environmental infrastructure;
 - e) provide a first rate visitor experience and grow the visitor figure to seven million by 2018/19;
 - f) continue to reduce the cost of Lee Valley Regional Park to the taxpayers of London, Essex and Herts.

PARK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 2 The Authority has retained consultants to develop a new set of strategic policies to replace those included in the Park Plan (1998). This work will be informed by the changing socio-economic and environmental context of the Regional Park and the Authority's new Corporate Land and Property Strategy. Further work has been commissioned on landscape which will form part of the evidence base for the policies. An issues paper will be presented to the Park Development Framework Panel in November. It is anticipated that this whole process will be completed by September 2018.

LAND & PROPERTY STRATEGY

- 3 Members will be aware that following approval of the draft Corporate Land and Property Strategy by the Executive Committee in December 2016, the Authority adopted the Strategy on 19 January 2017. The next stage of the work has been to review and prioritise all areas of land identified by the Member working group for both potential disposal and acquisition. With the assistance of external consultants, the officer working group are continuing with reviewing and prioritising work on areas of land that are suitable for disposal. The progress made in these areas will be discussed with the Member working group. Members will be aware that the Authority has already declared that one site has been considered in the review as no longer required for Park purposes and our consultants have been instructed on this to devise a marketing strategy and investigate the market with a view to disposal at best consideration.

PICKETTS LOCK

- 4 Members agreed to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with a Developer Investor (DI) in relation to two discrete areas at Picketts Lock, namely the North West Arena Site and the former Picketts Lock Indoor Bowls Club site. An agent has since been procured to work with Authority officers and the DI to bring forward a leisure-led scheme. The Exclusivity Agreement ends in December 2017 following which the DI will need to bring forward a viable scheme for Members to consider. It is expected that a meaningful ground rent can be negotiated for the leasing of the land.

In addition, and following interest from the market, the Authority has via its agents advertised for expressions of interest for two other areas on Picketts Lock which are currently occupied by the Trust under the Leisure Services Contract (LSC). The marketing exercise ended on 6 October and the agents have received a variety of responses. The viability of these will be considered by the agents and officers and a report will be brought back to Members at a future meeting.

ICE CENTRE PROJECT

- 5 The Ice Centre project has reached a crucial stage. The concept design (RIBA stage 2) has been completed for the twin pad scheme along with a detailed business plan (signed off by the Ice Centre operator) and a capital cost plan. In addition as part of the capital funding work, a separate commission has been looking at the development and valuation scenarios for the Waterworks site. Other capital funding sources that have been explored include Sport England and the Greater London Authority.

The capital funding and planning challenges remain significant and the Authority

will need to seriously consider whether a new twin pad scheme is feasible and whether there are other more modest schemes that should be looked at.

The Ice Centre Working Group will discuss these matters in detail at its next meeting in November.

In the meantime the £500k recently invested by the Authority in the current Ice Centre has delivered a much improved venue which will be able to operate for the next 2-3 years.

REVISION OF LEE VALLEY BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

- 6 The draft of the revised Lee Valley Biodiversity Action Plan is nearing completion for consultation to key stakeholders, both internal and external. The document reviews the key habitats and species within the Regional Park and current action to date, as well as providing broad aims for each. It will provide the framework for the formation of both habitat and species working groups drawn together from key regional partners which in turn will produce SMART targets for focussed biodiversity delivery within the Regional Park, by the Authority and partners over the coming 5 years. There are a couple of new additions to the species action plans that reflect their developing importance within the Regional Park.

EAST INDIA DOCK BASIN

- 7 Since the detailed update report in January there has been little progress on the future of this site. The application for builders cabins on the eastern part of the site has been delayed in the planning process and the application for SS Robin has been paused by the Authority pending further considerations over the need to be able to access the 'winding gear' for the double lock gates. A meeting was held on 12 October with the local member of parliament, Jim Fitzpatrick and Tower Hamlets councillors and officers, including Authority Member Denise Jones. An oral update will be given at the Authority meeting. There has been further correspondence with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

A small café has opened up on the site which is bringing some activation to the Basin.

ETON MANOR

- 8 Authority and Trust officers along with key stakeholders, the Tennis Foundation and England Hockey, have been in the process of developing a masterplan for the site. The overarching aim is to fulfil the potential of the site, in terms of greater activity and increased footfall and a reduced revenue cost, through investment in new developments. A feasibility exercise has been looking at:
 - additional indoor tennis courts;
 - review and recommended way forward for the outdoor sporting provision;
 - enhancements to the stadium to become fit for purpose for the Hockey World League;
 - increased hospitality and conferencing capacity;
 - visitor accommodation, location and size; and
 - associated business plan.

This piece of work will be completed by the end of October and officers will bring a paper to Members by the end of 2017 outlining the recommended next steps.

DOBBS WEIR

- 9 Members approved the final phase expansion of Dobbs Weir Caravan Park in May 2016, to include the remaining 63 holiday plots and associated services, parking and roadways. Following the tender process, Members agreed a revised budget of £2,350,000 which was set aside for these works in December 2016.

As a result of the tender, ACS Construction Group were appointed as principal contractor for the main final phase works to the value of £1.8million. Works were completed at the beginning of July 2017, both on time and on budget.

- 10 Ark Build were appointed as the main contractor for the toilet block works to the value of £128k to run concurrently with the site expansion works above. Unfortunately Ark Build had to withdraw from the contract. Officers are now seeking alternatives to provide a toilet block to the site, whilst also pressing forward with completing works to provide 2 new luxury lodges to the Caravan Park for 2018.

LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK 50th ANNIVERSARY

- 11 Anniversary activities have been carried out to reach stakeholders and visitors. Stakeholders have been targeted with messages about how the Authority has led the transformation of the valley over the past 50 years; and visitors have been encouraged to visit the park during its 50th year: to discover it for the first time, to rediscover it if they have not visited for some time or to see different parts of the park if they already visit.

Key stakeholder activity

In June more than 100 stakeholders attended the private view of *From Wasteland to Parkland: Lee Valley Regional Park at 50* – an exhibition charting the history of the Lee Valley over the past decade. Speakers were Chairman Paul Osborn, Deputy Mayor for London Joanne McCartney, Prof Michael Dower, an early advocate of Lee Valley Regional Park, Chief Executive Shaun Dawson and Tony Travers Director of the Institute of Public Affairs at the London School of Economics.

The private view was an opportunity for stakeholders to see the contribution Lee Valley Regional Park has made to the city. The speakers told how the Authority, with others, has managed to change the valley, much of which was rubbish dumps, railway sidings, sewage works and abandoned industrial buildings, and create the award winning collection of sports venues and open spaces it is today, as well as discussed its plans for the future.

People were able to visit the exhibition throughout July at New London Architecture, a discussion forum focused on London's built environment in central London.

The exhibition was based on a book of the same title written by Professor Travers and distributed to around 300 stakeholders. It is on sale online and at Lee Valley venues and is a permanent record of the achievements of the park and the Authority. It has a foreword from HRH the Duke of Edinburgh who helped galvanise support for the park in the 1960s.

Visitor activity

To mark the 50th anniversary, the Authority and Trust ran their most successful online competition to date – the Lee Valley Big 50 giveaway from 13 April to 12 May offering 900 activity prizes at Lee Valley and partner venues. 3,300 people entered the ballot and made 26,700 individual applications for prizes (people could apply for more than one prize). The programme was backed by on and offline advertising and the most popular prizes were accommodation, boating and rafting.

Officers ran a summer advertising campaign about the variety of activities within the park. They have also launched new products such as Super Fresh Milk at Lee Valley Park Farms and Almost Wild Camping under the 50th banner, bringing the park to different people in different ways; and included 50th anniversary messaging in major events activity.

A mobile version of *From Wasteland to Parkland: Lee Valley Regional Park at 50* is currently at Lee Valley VeloPark and will be moving to Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre, while another version will be on display in the stable block at Myddelton House.

A history video charting the changes in the park is showing at venues.

A programme of 50 weekend walks has run over the year introducing visitors to different areas of the park and bringing to life its nature, wildlife and historic elements. These have been mostly led by volunteers and have been delivered along the length of the park.

LEISURE SERVICES CONTRACT (LSC) COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

- 12 The LSC has reached the mid point of the 5 year term. The formal procurement process for the new LSC (starting April 2020) will commence in September 2018. Between now and then the Authority needs to determine its procurement strategy for what is likely to be a longer contractual arrangement for its 14 venues.

Before focusing on the next LSC there is the requirement to review the current LSC. This requirement is set out in the LSC and the Authority and Trust are to jointly review the LSC. The review has 3 main objectives:

- identify areas that can be improved during the remaining 2+ years of the contract;
- enable the Authority to terminate the LSC early (end of year 4) if it is dissatisfied with the Trust's performance; and
- inform the thinking around the procurement strategy for the next LSC.

Authority officers have carried out a review of the LSC and this will be discussed at the first meeting of the LSC Member working group on 19 October. The Trust is also carrying out its own review and this will be completed by the end of 2017. A report will go to the January Authority meeting presenting the conclusion of the joint review and outlining any recommended actions.

LEVY STRATEGY / 4 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN

- 13 Members approved a 6% reduction in the levy for 2017/18 at Authority on

19 January 2017 (Paper A/4236/17). This was supported by the approved Medium Term Financial Plan to 2021 and provides for a four year saving target of 25%. Central to achieving the 25% target is a significantly reduced management fee for the LSC. One of the key measures for delivering the management fee reduction is further investment.

The Authority continues to invest in its venues as it seeks to maximise the income generating potential of its assets. Officers have worked closely with the Trust to develop and implement a range of schemes. The returns on this investment will feed through in the form of a reduced management fee for the LSC.

Total investment of £4.1m:

- £1.4m Dobbs Weir Campsite - to complete the final phases of site redevelopment with an anticipated 10% plus return on investment;
- £0.5m Lee Valley Hockey & Tennis Centre – permanent infrastructure investment to ensure the Western Plaza is developed to support major events and further income generation and reduce direct financial support from the Authority for major events;
- £0.5m Lee Valley Ice Centre – new ice pad and barrier to prevent major service failure, safeguard the revenue surplus and ensure ongoing service provision as new Ice Centre proposals are developed;
- £0.5m Lee Valley White Water Centre - area 4 inflatable attraction to increase usage and income at the venue over the summer months;
- £0.2m Lee Valley White Water Centre – play area/swale temporary marquee and temporary office accommodation to improve summer offer and income;
- £0.5m Lee Valley White Water Centre – Café counter redesign to improve customer offer re catering and improve income returns on catering;
- £0.5m Lee Valley White Water Centre - Kitchen redesign to improve customer offer re catering, address health and safety issues and improve income returns from catering.

REVIEW OF IT INFRASTRUCTURE AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

- 14 System and IT infrastructure requirements have been reviewed by a joint Authority/Trust officer working group as part of the business plans for both the Trust and Authority and as part of the Leisure Services Contract review. A full audit of systems has been completed and is currently being reviewed alongside a strategy and action plan. This has been considered by both the Authority and Trust Senior Management Teams and will be presented to both the Authority and Trust Board during the coming months for approval and implementation from the new year.

REGIONAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

- 15 During the first half of 2017/18 there have been a number of programmes designed to reach out to a regional audience.

Community Access Fund

After a successful pilot programme in 2016/17 the Authority committed to a further 2 year programme. The £90k per annum fund is designed to support hard to reach groups and schools in accessing the Regional Park with an

emphasis on non-riparian Boroughs. To date in 2017/18 officers have engaged with groups/schools from 23 London Boroughs, 8 Boroughs from Essex and 8 Boroughs from Herts. 49 community groups and 31 schools have taken part in activities funded by the Community Access Fund.

Schools Festivals

Two Schools Festivals have been run this year, at the Lee Valley White Water Centre and Lee Valley Hockey & Tennis Centre. The former attracted 56 schools from 56 Boroughs from across the region, involving 544 schoolchildren. The Hockey and Tennis Schools Festival attracted 37 schools from across 34 Boroughs.

Wild Camping

A new initiative was launched in July, 'Wild Camping' at the new 'Almost Wild Campsite' in the north of the park at Carthegena. The aim is to provide a natural camping experience with minimal facilities. The site operates for short weekend stays and has proved popular to date. It has been fully booked for most weekends and almost 1000 people have already enjoyed the experience. Over 50% of the visitors have come from non-riparian Boroughs, with 15% outside London and the South East.

AWARDS

- 16 Awards and accreditations can provide a useful mechanism for external assessment of the Authority's performance in relation to other similar organisations.

Quest Stretch

The Sports Development team were recently awarded the Quest Stretch accreditation, the highest possible Quest award. The Authority is the first organisation in the country to receive such an award.

Green Flag and Green Heritage

The Authority has been applying for Green Flag awards since 2005 and has steadily increased the number of sites being awarded. This year the Authority has been awarded 9 Green Flags plus an additional joint award for the management of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park:

- Walthamstow Marshes;
- Bow Creek Ecology Park;
- Rye House Gatehouse;
- Waltham Abbey Gardens;
- Myddelton House Gardens;
- River Lee Country Park;
- Gunpowder Park;
- Tottenham Marshes; and
- Waterworks Centre Nature Reserve.

Green Heritage awards have also been retained for 3 heritage sites:

- Rye House Gatehouse;

- Waltham Abbey Gardens; and
- Myddelton House Gardens.

London in Bloom

In 2017 the Authority submitted 6 sites, achieving Gold award status at all 6 sites:

- Bow Creek Ecology Park;
- Walthamstow Marshes;
- Waterworks Centre Nature Reserve;
- Tottenham Marshes;
- Myddelton house Gardens; and
- Gunpowder Park.

In addition the Authority was awarded category winner of the year for 3 of the sites:

- Bow Creek Ecology Park – Conservation Area of the Year;
- Walthamstow Marshes – Large Conservation Area of the Year; and
- Myddelton House Gardens – Large Park of the Year.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

17 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

19 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

21 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

22 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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| the Trust | Lee Valley Leisure Trust Ltd trading as Vibrant Partnerships |
| LSC | Leisure Services Contract |
| DI | Developer Investor |

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

Authority A/4234/16 Authority 6 Month Work Programme Update 20 Oct 2016

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