

**COMMITTEE – January 2010**

<b>Title of paper:</b>	Highfield Sports Ground and Park Improvements	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Hugh White Director of Sport, Leisure and Parks	<b>Wards affected:</b>
<b>Contact Officer(s) and contact details:</b>	<p>Nigel Hawkins Head of Sport Leisure and Parks Business Management <a href="mailto:nigel.hawkins@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">nigel.hawkins@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Eddie Curry Head of Parks and Open Spaces 0115 915 2733 <a href="mailto:eddie.curry@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">eddie.curry@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a></p>	
<b>Other officers who have provided input:</b>	Geoff Walker Strategic Finance officer John Wileman – Head of Sport & Leisure	
<b>Relevant Council Plan theme(s):</b>		
World Class Nottingham		<b>X</b>
Work in Nottingham		
Safer Nottingham		
Neighbourhood Nottingham		<b>X</b>
Family Nottingham		
Healthy Nottingham		<b>X</b>
Serving Nottingham Better		<b>X</b>
<b>Summary of issues:</b>		
<p>This report provides a summary of proposals to review the management of the Highfield's Sports Ground and through the income generated and resources released begin the regeneration of the adjacent Grade II Listed Highfield Park in line with the Master Plan and Condition survey produced by FPCR.</p>		
<b>Recommendations:</b>		
<b>1</b>	Endorse the development plans and proposals to offer 125 year lease of the Highfield's Sports Ground to Complete Football in partnership with the Highfield Sports Club, as set out in section 2.1 of this report, to Nottingham City Council Executive Board acting as Trustees of the Highfield Leisure Park Trust, subject to Charity Commission approval.	
<b>2</b>	Endorse the master plan and the proposal to utilise the annual funding secured from the Highfield Sports Ground to regenerate / restore Highfields Park, as set out in section 2.3 of this report, to Nottingham City Council Executive Board acting as Trustees of the Highfield Leisure Park Trust, subject to Charity Commission approval.	
<b>3</b>	Note the financial implications as detailed in section 4.0 of this report.	
<b>4</b>	Note the risks as outlined in section 5.0 of this report	

## **1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Highfields Sport Ground, south of the University Boulevard, forms part of the land that was conveyed to the Council to hold “for the purpose of public recreation and pleasure grounds for the people of the City of Nottingham” and has been administered by Nottingham City Council as the Trustee of the Highfields Leisure Park Trust.
- 1.2 For many years the condition of the Highfield Sports Ground has failed to meet the expectation of our local sporting communities. In 2000 parts of the site containing the Hockey pitches and club house were leased to the Highfield Sports Club for a term of 30 years. This lease arrangement has enabled the Club to access a significant amount of sports lottery funding which has been used to improve the quality of the artificial sports pitches, changing rooms and the club house. Please see Appendix 1 which outlines the Highfield Sports Club's leased area.
- 1.3 However despite this investment the club has for some time struggled to secure sufficient revenue from pitch hire, social events and catering etc to meet the considerable and increasing cost of running and maintaining the facilities. The club have recognised that if they are going to be able to achieve their longer term ambition for ensuring that the site is a Hockey venue of International significance, they needed to work in partnership with another commercial partner and through this work they have developed a more complete development proposal for this site in partnership with Complete Football.
- 1.4 The areas outside of the Highfield Sports Club lease include the grass football pitches in front of the club house and pitches located at the back of the site along Beeston Sidings. These pitches are managed directly by the Parks and Open Spaces team but the quality of these pitches is inconsistent and the changing facilities are also poor. Over recent years these football pitches have also been used to generate extra income for Highfield Park from short/ Medium term leases to the Christmas club and Notts County Football Club.
- 1.5 At present the pitches along Beeston Sidings are hired to Notts FC for a period of two years with the potential for a further one year extension being permissible. As part of this hire agreement, Notts County have agreed to invest in the quality of the pitches and maintain the full area during the term of their occupation. At the end of this period the high quality pitches will then return to the Council for potential inclusion into the Highfield Sports Club and Complete Football Lease.
- 1.6 Adjacent to the Highfield Sports Ground is the Grade II Listed Highfield Park. Over the last 30 years the park has seen a major downturn in both the standard of maintenance and the quality of the Parks Infrastructure, paths, the Lake, Buildings etc. In order to start the process of regenerating the site the Parks and Open Spaces team commissioned the production of a conservation plan and a restoration master plan. The plan has identified that over £4.5 million pounds is needed to fully restore the park. However in order to get things moving and demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving the site. During this summer work has been carried out all around the Park to remove overgrown shrubs, edge of paths and most notably de-silt and partially restore the Japanese gardens. This work involved a partnership between the Gardening staff and the community payback team and has resulted in a major physical improvement and for the first time in over 20 years seen the site's waterfall return to working order. Clearly this is a great start but more work is now needed to fully restore the entire park. Appendix 2 shows a copy of the restoration master plan and the cost summary.

## **2 PROPOSALS**

2.1 Highfeild Sports Club and Complete Football have approached the Council with an offer to take over the management and development of the entire Highfield Sports Ground Site. In return the City Council will receive:-

- Investment into the Highfeild Sports Ground of just over £3 million for the development of new world class football coaching facilities comprising off; a new club house / changing facility ; The creation of a new Flood Lit multi-use coaching Pitch and eight Flood Lit 3G mini football pitches ; Treatment and Rehabilitation Rooms.
- The new football facilities being provided by Complete Football will enable free access to Schools and Community Use Groups to use these facilities Monday to Friday, between 9 am and 4 pm.
- Through the proposal being offered Complete Football in agreement with Highfeild Sports Club will undertake the grounds maintenance element of the Sports Ground, enabling the existing grounds maintenance capacity on that site to be re-focused upon improving the maintenance standards of the Highfield Park.
- At the end of Notts County's hire of the Beeston Siding football pitches, Complete football will take over the management and maintenance of these pitches and manage the letting of them to local football teams on behalf of the Council.
- The new Lease will pay the Council an annual commercial rental for this site. This rental will be increased in line with RPI every five years throughout the term of the Lease.

Attached as Appendix 1 is a plan that highlights the Sport Development proposals being made for the site.

2.2 It is proposed that the additional income being generated to the Charitable Trust will be used to repay a loan accessed via the government's prudential borrowing framework. The annual fee will be looked to be matched with other external grants, section 106 and existing trust monies in order to enable expenditure in excess of £1million to be made to start the restoration of Highfield Park. The key priority areas for restoration are detailed in Appendix 1.

2.3 However whilst it is clear that this funding will significantly improve the park it will not fully restore the entire park. Therefore priority should be given to the main heritage features such as the lake, buildings and play facilities that if fully restored / improved could generate additional income that could be re invested to support a programme of / phased improvements to the rest of the Park.

## **2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)**

2.1 For many years the Council has received numerous complaints about both the quality of the infrastructure / facilities and maintenance of both Highfield Sports Ground and Highfield Park. This arrangement with the Complete football group represents a significant opportunity to improve the quality of both the sporting and recreational offer within the City.

2.2 Highfield Park was identified as a key priority project within the Breathing Space Local

Investment plans and the development being proposed is in line the Councils ambition to promote Nottingham as a World Class city of sport and work towards hosting a programme of international sporting events and a thriving local sports scene.

### **3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 None

### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)**

4.1 The proposed development by Complete Football with the Highfield Sports Club will generate additional resources for the benefit of the Highfields Trust.

4.2 Given the need to generate capital resources to deliver the masterplan for Highfields Park, these additional resources could be used to undertake prudential borrowing (assuming that there is capacity to undertake further prudential borrowing within the overall capital programme for the City Council). Based on current borrowing information a 20 year loan assuming averaged repayments this would generate £0.675m of capital resources (assuming a 3.96% interest rate).

4.3 This financing will be used to lever in match financing from grant funding bodies. The opportunity to release funds held by the Highfields Trust will be explored with the trustees and the Charities Commission to support delivery of the masterplan.

### **5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)**

5.1 The land that forms part of the Highfields Sport Ground, south of the University Boulevard, was conveyed to the Council to hold the same "for the purpose of public recreation and pleasure grounds for the people of the City of Nottingham.

Over the years there have been a number of dispositions of freehold interest in the land. These include various exchanges with the University, the acquiring of land at Beeston Sidings and the conveyance of land to Notts County Council for road widening.

In addition, the Council as Trustees, over this time, has granted a number of leases (or licences) of the land subject to the 1923 Indenture.

5.3 In looking at the proposal a range of considerations in relation to risk management relating to this development have been considered. In brief these include;

- ◆ Ensuring the sustainability and future development of the Highfield Sports Ground and the Highfields Hockey Club.
- ◆ Carrying out necessary due diligence checks and investigations in relation to Complete Football.
- ◆ Considering the impact in the short term of the displacement of the present local football teams playing on the site temporarily during development and the hire agreement in place with Notts County.
- ◆ Consideration of the need for investment into the site to improve quality and commence the restoration of the Highfield Park to achieve Green Flag standard.

5.4 The use of the revenue savings to fund additional prudential borrowing assumes that there is capacity within the overall limits set by the City Council to undertake additional prudential borrowing. Failure to convert the revenue funding in to capital resources will limit the opportunity to secure external match funding.

**6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION**

6.1 None

**7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

7.1 Highfield Park Conservation Plan  
“Breathing Space” Local Area Prioritised Investment plans

## Appendix 1

# Highfields Park Masterplan Estimate Costs - August 2009

The summary attached is an overview of the costs produced from the Master Plan and Condition Survey produced FPCR; this plan is now in its final draft and the costs may be subject to change.

- **Existing buildings and features - refurbishment and repair of existing historic building features on the site.**

**£302,300.00**

The most valuable investment in this area would be to make investment in the **two pavilion buildings and the entrance with the eagle gate posts and Jesse Boot Bust**. This is because it would allow us to make a big statement to the park visitors during the 2010 Croquet World Championships and this entrance off University Boulevard is featured in most photograph and film footage of the park and is the memorable entrance that people remember. It is also worth giving consideration to the **Cascade feature** at the head of the lake as this will have a considerable visual impact if restored to working order and would still make a huge difference if the landscape around it was improved and the base cleaned out in anticipation of the lake de silt and repair to the mechanics.

- **Boundaries and gateways - all boundary treatments and any fencing, gating and wall work within the site.** This work can be phased over several years with commitment being made to complete work on an agreed number of meters a year.

**£199,541.00**

- **Hard surfacing and resurfacing - estimated costs for the repair of existing footpaths to be kept and the construction of new footpaths and car parks** as the park is developed. Again this work can be phased over a number of years.

**£522,287.50**

- **Furniture and signage** - refurbishment and replacement of the bins benches and signs on site. This is an ongoing programme that has so far been funded through the Variation budget for the site and this could continue as a rolling programme.

**£82,800.00**

- **Vegetation and arboriculture work - the clearance and replanting where necessary of trees and shrub borders on the site.**

This is an area where a big impact can be made by the removal of horticulture that is overgrown and diseased or dying. Due to secondary and tertiary planting in the fifties and seventies the park is overcrowded and many of the original intended vistas and views have been lost. By investing in the removal of some of this additional planting then the vistas can be some what restored and the park opened up. This is an area where a major visual impact can be made for small financial input and the main areas of focus would be the **Rhododendron border** that runs the length of University Boulevard and the **Azalea borders** closer to the paddling pool. Also the **Japanese garden** atop the Cascade would be a good target for this investment. Removal of trees and over grown shrubs across the park landscape and along the course of the **Tottle Brook** would have a massive impact also.

**£294,892.44**

- **New Buildings and Features** - opportunities for **development and modernisation** on the park and the first area that should be addressed is the **children's playground** which at present is in a dilapidated condition and warrants a major investment to return it to a destination standard.

**£754,750.00**

- **Lake Rehabilitation** - the work that needs to be undertaken to return the lake to a healthy condition through **de-silting and other associated work to the edges and islands**. This is an action that is central to the success of the project and all other investment success hinges on this, i.e. without de-silting the lake the cascade cannot be repaired and made functional and the Maid Marion Pleasure craft cannot sail once repaired because her draft is too deep. The lake sides and island walls cannot be repaired properly and any clearance of the Tottle Brook would have its value diminished, however the high cost of this element of the refurbishment makes it prohibitive and without a determined bid to a large funding body supported by a considerable match from Nottingham City Council and other partners is unachievable. Consideration as to how this element will be completed and maintained in the future needs to be considered carefully as the other elements can be achieved in piece meal with funding bids to smaller funding bodies where as this cannot.

**£773,000.00**

<b>Total</b>	£ 2,927,570.94
<b>Preliminaries at 17.5%</b>	£ 512,324.91
<b>Sub-Total</b>	£ 3,439,895.85
<b>Consultants, Specialists &amp; Statutory Fees at 12.5%</b>	
	£ 429,986.98
<b>Sub-Total</b>	£ 3,869,882.84
<b>Contingency at 5%</b>	£ 1,93,494.14
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATE</b>	<b>£ 4,063,376.98</b>



# Highfield Park - Master Plan



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Highfield Park Master Plan  
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## HIGHFIELDS PARK - ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN



## **Appendix 2:- Complete Football Improvement plans for Highfields Sports Ground**