

LYMINGTON HEALTH AND LEISURE – CAR PARK EXTENSION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has been approached by the Head Teacher of Priestland's School requesting partnership funding for an extension to the on-site car park that is shared with Lymington Health & Leisure Centre.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Lymington Health and Leisure Centre was extended in 2006 with partnership funding from Sport England; Hampshire County Council; New Forest District Council and Lymington and Pennington Town Council. Part of the extension included a new car park with provision for 95 spaces.
- 2.2 Since the extension in 2006 the Centre has been successful in generating new customers and has increased its income by £150,000 (18%). This has had an obvious impact the need for parking provision. Currently there are a number of "pinch points" throughout the week, both during the day and evening, when cars are parking in unauthorised areas such as pedestrian walkways and grass verges. There has been concern raised by both the School Head Teacher and Centre Facility Manager regarding safety and the potential implications of impaired sightlines for both pedestrians and drivers. Damage is also being caused to the soft verges.
- 2.3 Restrictions on parking availability will inevitably have an effect on the business performance of the centre, either through customer dissatisfaction at not being able to access the activities they have paid for or, in the future, not expanding the programme to meet latent demand. The recent annual Centre Customer Survey (115 returns) showed a 90% positive response overall for their visit (satisfied or very satisfied). However 49% rated the car parking provision as either poor or very poor.
- 2.4 During ongoing site meetings and regular communication between the School and Centre the Head Teacher approached officers in the Council with a view to extending the existing car park. They cited the following reasons.
- 2.4.1 Create a car free zone within the boundaries of the school buildings to enhance safety.
- 2.4.2 Install more informal seating areas for student use, avoid the clusters of students standing on the access road and parking bays.
- 2.4.3 A need to address the shared problem of insufficient parking bays for both the School and Health and Leisure Centre.
- 2.5 It was therefore decided to develop a joint proposal that would address the needs of both parties, making use of the School's ability to seek planning permission for works on their own land, and to share the capital costs.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Priestland's School, in association with Hampshire County Council, has provided a plan to extend the existing car park by 80 spaces. The proposed area of development would be on land owned by the School, with direct access from the existing car park (Please see attached plan).
- 3.2 At the time of writing the report the School have submitted a planning application to New Forest District Council.
- 3.3 Projected costs for the project are estimated at £156,000 (inclusive of fees). It should be noted, however, this is a pre-tender estimation and therefore could be subject to change.
- 3.4 The School initially approached the Council with a request for a 50% contribution. This was rejected on the basis that the request was outside of the Council's normal financial programme and that it did not provide best value to the Council. Following negotiations the School has agreed to a 25% contribution of £40,000 from this Council and they will increase their contribution accordingly.

4.0 COUNCIL POSITION

- 4.1 The car park is under licence to New Forest District Council from Hampshire County Council. This licence makes provision for 23 spaces to be allocated to Priestland's School for their use during the school day. The Centre has use of the remaining 72 spaces during the day and the full 95 in the evenings and at weekends. This extension will increase availability to 87 spaces during the day and 175 in the evenings and weekends.
- 4.2 This proposal offers the best opportunity to address the issue of insufficient parking. It is very unlikely that the Council would independently secure permission to build on this land. This partnership approach also ensures the Council's financial contribution is significantly lower than it might otherwise be.

5.0 TIMESCALES

- 5.1 The School have expressed their desire for the works to be completed during the summer holidays when the demands on the car park are at their lowest. This would also benefit the Health & Leisure Centre timetable. This meant the timescales were tight for New Forest District Council to confirm a financial commitment.
- 5.2 The May Cabinet meeting was cancelled so the report was taken to the Asset Management Group on the 22nd April for their consideration and recommendation to Cabinet. The Asset Management Group supported the proposal and subsequently a waiver of Financial Regulations was produced and signed by the Head of Leisure and the Executive Director. This allowed the school to be contacted confirming that £40,000 will be made available to them by the District Council. It was agreed a note will be included within the Financial Report by the Executive Director with the final submission to Cabinet on the 5 June.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 It has been agreed by the Head of Leisure and the Executive Director that the District Council, based on the indicative cost figure, make a contribution of £40,000. This will allow the Centre to benefit from an additional 15 spaces during the day and the full 80 spaces during evenings and weekends. The agreement would be formalised.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The proposed site for the additional parking is a grassed area on school owned land. The area has no current practical use and is not used for any activity by either the School or the Centre. It is felt that any aesthetic loss is more than compensated by the safety and business requirements detailed earlier in the report.

8.0 CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications other than the improved opportunities to access the facilities of Lymington Health & Leisure Centre to provide meaningful activity.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications.

10.0 PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

10.1 The Portfolio Holder has expressed her support for the scheme recognising that this has been an ongoing issue for both parties for a number of years which has been regularly discussed at the Joint Management Board meetings. It is felt this scheme assists both parties and therefore will be of direct benefit to the local community.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Lymington is a high performing centre, exceeding capacity at various times within the week. There is an increasing demand for activities and therefore a need for associated parking. This is an opportunity to address current issues of demand as well as make provision for further expansion of the programme.

11.2 The partnership approach will further strengthen on-site relationships and provides the most effective use of financial resources for the Council.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 That Cabinet note the approval of a supplementary estimate for £40,000 as part of a wider scheme estimated to be £159,000.

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Background Papers:

