

**Report Title: Park Update**

**Report of: Mark Evison, Park Manager**

**1. Purpose:**

1.1 To provide an update on various Park matters

**2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That the Board

Notes the progress on the Park Vision exercise

- Notes the requirement to tender the Grounds Maintenance Contract
- Notes the progress on the Go Ape scheme and the satisfactory Charities Act report on the rental figures

Report Authorised by: **Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive**



Contact Officer: **Mark Evison, Alexandra Palace & Park, Alexandra Palace Way, Wood Green, N22 7AY Tel No: 020 8365 4144**

**3. Executive Summary**

3.1 Consultations on the future Vision for the Park are underway and the results will be presented to the Board in the Autumn.

3.2 Options for extension to the Grounds Maintenance Contract have been exhausted and the service will require tendering.

3.3 The Go Ape project is moving forward and a planning application from the tenants is imminent.

**4. Reasons for any change in policy or for any new policy development (if applicable)**

4.1 N/A

**5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

5.1 N/A

## **Background**

### **6. Background Park Update**

#### **6.1 Park Vision**

Further to previous reports, landscape architects *Exterior Architecture* have produced a discussion document in relation to the physical landscape and features of the Park. The physical landscape is one of four themes which will be discussed as this project progresses. This will include environment, historic landscape and recreational potential.

The other themes identified for discussion are:

- Park Tenancies
- Outdoor Events & Commercial Activities
- Policies and Byelaws.

The Park Manager held initial discussions on these topics with the Grounds Maintenance Team, the Committee of the Friends of Alexandra Park and Alexandra Palace Staff.

The next step is a discussion with the members of the Advisory and Consultative Committees, current plans are for session in mid-May.

The output from these sessions will be a series of targets and actions which can be presented to the Board in the autumn as the proposed framework of a new Strategy and Vision for managing the Park over the next 10-20 years.

#### **6.2 Grounds Maintenance Contract**

The Board will recall that the current arrangements with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, John O'Conner (GM) Ltd, expire at the end of April 2016.

The Park Manager has investigated various options to extend the contract beyond this date. The potential advantages of an extension are avoidance of the uncertainty and instability that a tendering process brings, avoidance of the associated costs in time and resources, and continuation of a successful and reliable service.

Benchmarking with other authorities shows that the current contract offers good value for money and the Trust's spend per hectare is below the London average (normalised values from 2009).

It was hoped that the Council's Contract Procedure Rules would allow the Board to approve a further extension of the contract. However, initial legal advice is that any further extension beyond the original advertised period would be open to challenge. This option therefore brings a certain degree of risk and will not now be pursued.

The Grounds Maintenance Contract will now be tendered by the Park Manager. The new Team Assistant and Procurement Manager will support this process.

The aim is to continue with the same level of service quality, and attempt to rationalise and make efficiencies where possible.

### **6.3 Go Ape course**

Members will recall that changes were made to the course layout following comments from the Advisory and Consultative Committees. Representatives from Go Ape recently met with Haringey Council for pre-application advice and no major issues were raised. The Council's Nature Conservation Officer requested that an ecological survey of the site be carried out prior to submission of the planning application. An initial ecological survey and five-year follow-up were already obligations in the draft Lease. This request brings that requirement forward, it is likely the survey report will be ready in late April. The Tenant is likely to submit a planning application shortly afterwards.

Furthermore, Go Ape are intending to hold a two-day information exercise in the Park in late April. Their staff will hand out leaflets to Park users and visitors and answer questions about the proposal.

The Board will also be pleased to note that the independent surveyor's Charities Act report on the rental figure is satisfactory and the Lease is ready to be sealed once planning permission has been granted.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The Council's Assistant Director Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments, save to confirm that the reason for the risk of challenge to an extension of the grounds maintenance contract is brought about by the fact that extensions go beyond the maximum period of extension that was advertised when the contract was tendered, and as such they would be non-compliant material changes to the contract. Accordingly, as the present contract does not expire until the end of April 2016, there ought to be sufficient time to facilitate a re-tender of the contract to take place".

## **8. Financial Implication**

- 8.1 Tendering of the Grounds Maintenance Contract could cost up to £20,000
- 8.2 The cost of the Grounds Maintenance Contract could rise and affect the Park maintenance budget for 2016 and beyond.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1 The Council's Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and notes the uncertainty that the requirement to re-tender the grounds maintenance contract brings however, it is also the chance to re-test the market and potentially to drive out further value; whatever the result, there will be time for the Trust to build changes into 16/17 budget. It is further noted that there will be costs,

estimated at £20k, associated with the procurement activity. The report is silent over how this expenditure will be covered and the Board should request confirmation on this point at the meeting.

## **10. Appendices**

10.1 There are none.