

Area North Committee – 26 February 2014

## 10. Capital Expenditure – Footpath at Minchington Close, Norton sub Hamdon (Executive Decision)

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### Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the allocation of £14,000 from the Area North capital programme (Local Priority Schemes) towards the cost of the construction of a hard surface footpath across SSDC owned land at Minchington Close, together with improved access to Skinners Lane in Norton-sub-Hamdon.

### Public Interest

There is currently no footpath along Skinner's Lane into the village of Norton-sub-Hamdon and those living there either walk along the side of a narrow road or cross SSDC land which has no hard surface and leads to steep stone steps down to the road. A hard surface footpath is planned to go across the land, together with improvements to visibility and access where the path would meet the highway as a slope rather than steps. This would greatly improve the safety of pedestrians.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that councillors allocate £14,000 from the Area North capital programme (Local Priority Schemes) for the construction of a footpath in Norton sub Hamdon, the scheme to be project managed by Engineering and Property Services. After completion any sum not required to be returned to Area North balances.

### Background

SSDC owns a small piece of land at Minchington Close, managed as public open space by Streetscene Services and which also includes an equipped play area.

Planning consent to Yarlington Homes was granted for the construction of 10 affordable homes for local people in Minchington Close, Norton-sub-Hamdon in August 2013. Construction has already started and it is to be expected that this will result in an increase in the number of people travelling to and from other parts of the village in particular, children and families going to and from school.

Currently, residents either have to walk down a narrow road which does not have a pavement or cross the SSDC owned open space which can be muddy and leads to uneven stone steps down to the road. The visibility here is not good and there are

concerns for the safety of pedestrians. It is not currently practical to cross the land with a buggy or wheelchair due to the soft ground and the steps.

### **The Project**

The project is to construct a hard surface footpath across SSDC owned land at Minchington Close, together with improved access to Skinners Lane in Norton-sub-Hamdon.

The project will provide a fully accessible and safe route into the village of Norton-sub-Hamdon from Minchington Close and neighbouring properties which will avoid the need to walk along a narrow road.

The expected local benefits are to improve residents' feeling of safety when walking through the village and thus encouraging people to walk rather than drive, and to improve the environment of the open space encouraging its use by all members of the community.

Detailed consultation was carried out with the Highways Department at Somerset County Council, the Parish Council and the ward member for The Hamdons to ensure the most appropriate footpath was designed. It was recognised that to build a path without improving the point where it met the highway would significantly reduce its value to the community and therefore designs were agreed whereby the road would be hatched and bollards installed in order to ensure as good visibility as possible.

The additional work required in order to provide safe transition to the road has added to the cost of the project, but the overall outcome will be far better for the community than the path ending in steps and poor visibility for both pedestrians and drivers.

The Parish Council is keen to promote the provision of an all-weather footpath, recognising that this would have several benefits, including the encouragement of residents to use and enjoy the existing, well-maintained open space and the provision of a much safer route for pedestrians to walk from one end of the village to the other. The latter would include the additional school children expected as a result of the new houses.

### **Consents, project management and future maintenance**

Planning consent is not required to construct the pathway. On-going costs can be from existing budgets with any work necessary in the future carried out by Streetscene Services as part of the normal maintenance programme for the area.

The SSDC Open Spaces Officer supports the project.

### **Project Costs.**

Quotations have been invited from an outside contractor and SSDC Streetscene Services as an internal contractor in order to ensure value for money. It is expected that the total cost of the project will be no more than £15,000, and the final quotation should be available at the time of committee. If the capital funding is approved, the work will be carried out by the approved contractor as soon as practical. The agreed quotation is valid for 90 days.

As this is an improvement to SSDC owned land it unusual to benefit from third party contributions. The Parish Council has been very involved in the planning of the path, and has agreed to contribute a minimum of £1000 towards the cost of the project.

Funding from other sources has been sought but none has been successful, this is likely to be because the land is owned by SSDC.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This project is strongly supported by the parish council and local ward member, to address a problem for the community (poor pedestrian access along Skinners Lane) travelling to and from Minchington Close in particular and enhanced access to the public open space.

The scheme has been carefully designed and in full consultation with SCC highways, and will be managed by Engineering and Property Services.

It is recommended that an allocation of up to £14,000 is approved (ie the estimated cost less £1000 contribution from the parish council). After completion any sum not required to be returned to Area North balances.

### **Financial Implications**

If approval for the grant to Barrington Football Club (previous item on the agenda) was agreed, there is £239,536 available in the Area North Capital programme for Local Priority Schemes. If the recommended funding of £14,000 is allocated to Norton Sub Hamdon project, £225,536 will remain in this allocation for 2013-14 and for future years.

### **Council Plan Implications**

Focus Two: Environment: Continue to deliver schemes with local communities that enhance the appearance of their local areas.

### **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

The construction of an all-weather footpath could reasonably be expected to lead to a reduction in the number of car journeys to and from the school and recreation field, resulting in a reduction in carbon emissions generated by vehicles.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The Council is committed to promoting equality, recognising and valuing diversity and ensuring equal opportunities chances for all and this project will be fully compliant with these aims and the legislation laid down in the Equality Act 2010.