

Area West Committee – 18th August 2010

8. Grant Application for Flood Lighting in Happy Valley, Crewkerne (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

For members to consider a grant for financial assistance for flood lighting in Happy Valley from Crewkerne Town Council.

Public Interest

A large project is currently underway to make significant improvements to Happy Valley providing a better range of play and leisure facilities for all the community. To ensure these facilities can be used throughout the year a request is being made by Crewkerne Town Council for a financial contribution towards flood lighting for the Multi Use Games Area and skate ramp.

Recommendation

That a grant of £8,000 be awarded to Crewkerne Town Council as a contribution towards flood lighting the MUGA and skateboard ramp in Happy Valley.

Background

This grant application is to provide floodlighting to the skateboard ramp and new MUGA in Happy Valley, Crewkerne. This is part of a much larger project being carried out to improve the play and sports facilities for children and young people living in the south and west parts of the town.

Happy Valley is a large grassy recreation area surrounded by trees and located in a small valley between the residential areas of Valley Road and Kit Hill in Crewkerne. It was bequeathed to the town as a play area for children many decades ago. The park currently contains a skateboard ramp, an old basketball court, a grass football pitch and some swings. As there are so few facilities in the park for young children this area is not used much by the many local families that live close to the recreation area. Happy Valley also has a reputation for anti-social behaviour with many children and teenagers avoiding the park because of bullying.

Both Crewkerne Town Council and SSDC Community Health and Leisure have recognised the need for better facilities in Happy Valley for children of all ages and have each allocated £12,500 towards improvements. (In addition £25,000 was allocated from central government's Playbuilder Fund, which has recently been frozen pending a review). The combined £25,000 is being used to carry out Phase 1 of the project to improve the layout and infrastructure of the park. This work will include much needed footpaths, a large sandpit and some landscaping. The work is due to commence on site in autumn 2010.

In addition to the above work, SSDC Community Health & Leisure had already identified the need for a MUGA in Crewkerne, and after much discussion with the Town Council regarding its location, have now agreed to site that in Happy Valley. The MUGA will be located on the footprint of the existing basketball court next to the skateboard ramp and grass football pitch. Crewkerne Town Council has agreed to contribute £25,000 towards the cost of a MUGA and Somerset County Cllr John Dyke has awarded £1,800. It is proposed that whilst the contractors are on site in Autumn 2010 working to improve the infrastructure, they can also carry out excavations and other essential works needed to install the MUGA.

Flood Lighting in Happy Valley

Happy Valley is a large grassy area, which is currently underused even though it is surrounded by a large number of homes. After daylight hours the area is poorly lit as it only has three street lamps. This means that none of the current facilities can be used after dark, making the park feel very isolated from about 5pm onwards during the winter months.

As there will shortly be new footpaths, a sandpit and sports facilities located in Happy Valley there will be a requirement by residents of all ages to be able to use those facilities during the evenings of the winter months. The On Side football project, which takes place in Crewkerne, has already said they would like to hold training sessions on the MUGA on Wednesday evenings. As the MUGA will be located next to the skate ramp it means the flood lighting will also enable people to skateboard after dark.

Not only will the lighting benefit those people using the MUGA and skateboard ramp, the improved lighting will also allow other people to use the area after dark. Pedestrians living in Kit Hill could use the park as a short cut into the town centre but currently the poor lighting means that many people feel unsafe walking through the area after dark. During daylight hours many people walk their dogs in the park but again the lack of lighting means that during the winter months they cannot make use of the space. The improved lighting, along with the new footpaths, will encourage both dog walkers and pedestrians to use the area after dark. The increase in people using the park for a variety of activities will help make residents feel safe and should decrease any incidents of anti social behaviour.

Evidence of Need

To ensure all the improvements to Happy Valley meet the needs of the local community extensive public consultation has been carried out. In summer 2009 Barnados carried out a consultation with local children which highlighted what sorts of play the children like to engage in and the type of equipment they would like to see in Happy Valley. Alongside this consultation the Town Council and the SSDC Area West Community Regeneration Officer consulted with parents, nearby residents and other users of Happy Valley to ascertain their comments. This part of the consultation highlighted the concerns people have with bullying and anti social behaviour; those concerns were verified by the local PCSOs.

Following the consultation a public meeting was called for local people wishing to help make improvements to Happy Valley. People at that meeting also raised concerns about bullying and anti social behaviour but recognised that by increasing the number of people using Happy Valley they should be able to decrease the number of incidents. A group of parents from that meeting have gone on to form 'Happy Valley Endeavours', a community group which is organising events in Happy Valley during the school holidays.

Financial Implications

The £8,000 will come from the already agreed carry forward of £37,256 from the Area West Capital Programme as discussed at June's Area West Committee. If approved the work will commence in Autumn 2010.

Corporate Priority Implications

- 3.20 Increase children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas and adult participation in sport and active recreation from 23.3% to 25.4% by 2011/2012.
- 4.1 Deliver positive activities for children, young people (especially those at risk of exclusion or offending) and families, designed to reduce antisocial behaviour by October 2010.
- 4.5 Decrease perception that anti-social behaviour is a problem from 15% (in 2008) to 13% by 2010/11.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

The flood lighting will be on after daylight hours at agreed allocated times and will be turned off each night. Solar lighting was considered for this aspect of the project but unfortunately was too expensive for the budget.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The improved lighting will help make Happy Valley feel a safe place for all members of the community. The wider improvements to Happy Valley will improve access for people of all abilities.

Background Papers: *Area West 2009-10 Outturn Report - Area West Committee June 2010.*