

Joint Area Committee - South – 7th October 2009

14. Lighting at Birchfield Park (Excepted Business) (Executive Decision)

Head of Service: Martin Woods, Head of Area Development – South
Lead Officer: Martin Woods, Head of Area Development – South
Contact Details: Martin.woods@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462708

Purpose of the Report

To advise members of the situation regarding lighting at Birchfield Park, to update them on recent discussions, and to suggest a way forward.

Recommendations

- (1) Members note progress on Birchfield lights.
- (2) That they in principle support officers of Area South leading a team to bring forward improvements to lighting and paths in the park.
- (3) In principle support a bid to the corporate capital programme toward the scheme subject to further costings being made available.

Background

There have been recent member and public concerns regarding lighting at Birchfield Park. In response a recent meeting has taken place between officers and members to explore the situation and suggest a potential way forward.

Report Detail

Birchfield Park forms an important green corridor on the eastern side of Yeovil separating two densely populated residential areas, around Lyde Road and Cavalier Way, and between Lyde Road and Birchfield Road.

Pedestrian routes have been established through the park and now form an important part of the footpath network for residents, linking homes, shops, schools, pubs and other community facilities.

These routes are well used, as they provide direct links to all the facilities described above, and the alternative routes around the road network are less direct.

Lighting on the two principle east west and north south routes has been provided by the council, but the lighting is susceptible to vandalism.

The result is there are frequently lights that are not working, and when they are repaired they often are broken shortly after. The paths themselves are adequate but narrow in places and the surface would benefit from improvement.

A meeting has taken place between SSDC engineers, the Streetscene Manager and the Head of Area Development South, together with a ward member, the Chairman of Area South and the Portfolio Holder for Property Services.

The meeting explored options for the future. These included;

1. Remove lights from the park
2. Repair existing lights on a regular basis – accepting that there may be times when access is restricted by site conditions.
3. Prepare a scheme to light the paths to modern standards and improve the surface underfoot where required.

1. Do Nothing and Remove Lights

This was not considered acceptable given the fact that these paths would continue to be used to link residential areas and community facilities as there were no direct alternatives. Although it is not necessary to light public parks, in this instance these routes provide important urban pedestrian links, and are not just for park users.

2. Repair Existing Lights on a Regular Basis

There is a cost element to this, and also a practical issue in terms of accessing the site with the vehicle to repair the lights. The ground conditions are such that after rain and potentially during most of the winter taking this vehicle through the park would damage the surface and create ruts. Routinely having lights that are out of action is a source of annoyance to residents.

3. Prepare a scheme to Light, Repair and Improve Paths

There seems to be little doubt that in the longer term this is the preferred option. It would have the following benefits;

- Encourage people to travel between school, homes, shops and community facilities on foot rather than take the car.
- The lighting would be designed to minimise vandalism.
- This investment would demonstrate further commitment to this part of Yeovil which is going to complement the work done in the community to start the Community Association, and the investment that will take place in the play area shortly.
- Schools are increasingly being used outside of school hours for after school clubs etc and this will provide a well lit path to the school for this purpose.
- It would under this option be possible to consider a possibility of creating a cycle link between the school and Lyde Road.

The Next Stages

The Engineer will prepare a costed scheme for consideration and a timeline for its potential implementation. This will need to be funded. The likely sources for this would include;

- The Area South Capital Programme
- The District-wide Capital Programme
- The Town Council
- The Yeovil Without Parish Council
- Somerset County Council

More work will need to be done once the costings are in order to approach the bodies concerned, but we first need a detailed costing. This will then be brought back to Area South Committee for decision. I have discussed this with the council's capital programme finance officer, and she considers that although the deadline for bids has passed there is still an opportunity to put a bid in to the council's overall capital programme.

Financial Implications

The Area South Capital Programme currently stands at £106,600 uncommitted, but a bid will be made to the corporate capital programme.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

This project would address the corporate priority theme for Safe, Sustainable and Cohesive Communities.

Background Papers: None
