

Responses to Overview and Scrutiny re Beckenham Place Park, July 2017

Issue 1: Budget

I am writing about the officer report regarding Beckenham Place Park submitted to Mayor and Cabinet, 19/7/17. If you have had time to read it you should be aware of a number of anomalies in Ms Taylor's response to SDSC queries. Before I come to that, however, there is a more serious anomaly that SDSC might like to take up with her and Mayor and Cabinet.

In section 11 she confirms the project cost of £8.6M, which is unsurprisingly the same figure indicated in the Heritage Lottery Fund case paper, of which £4.9M is HLF grant, the rest to be sourced from elsewhere. However, she refers to additional funds which will specifically enable the restoration of the homestead cottages. But how can that be? The homestead cottages were not included in the HLF case paper figure of £8.6M, she confirms the project costs are, indeed, £8.6M but all of a sudden the homestead cottages are included. So that means something else in the scheme has to drop out?!

The penny has finally dropped that the derelict state of the homestead cottages will impact negatively on the restored/rebuilt stable block and she is asking for funds for those cottages out of the Council's capital programme, but this is not reflected in the £8.6M project costs unless there is a change to the plan submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund.

Response:

The Stage D cost plan for the Round 2 HLF application showed income to the project (ie total project budget) as £8,368,918. Translating this into a workable Council budget three small amendments have been made:

- a) The HLF figure includes £99,000 volunteer time, which is something the HLF monetarise and count towards the project budget. It is not typically the approach we would take within the Council, as this volunteer labour will not normally be engaged in delivering the physical transformation of the park.
- b) The HLF budget figure also includes £50,000 income for the creation of the BMX track. In fact this is going ahead as a separate piece of work, procured and managed by Access Sport, and so is not now included in the Council budget for the project.
- c) The internal insurance funds allocated to the project are now £180k rather than the £200k anticipated at the time of the Round 2 submission (July 2016).

This then amounts to a project budget of

£8,368,918 – £99,000 – £50,000 – £20,000 = £8,199,918

This is made up as follows:

Local authority (already allocated)	£1,290,000
Environment Agency	£1,580,000
GLA	£600,000
Parks for People Grant	£4,729,000

TOTAL	£8,199,000
Additional contribution agreed at Mayor and Cabinet	£500,000
Current total project budget	£8,699,000

Please note because rounded figures were used in the Mayor and Cabinet report (3 sf only) the total budget was presented as £8.67m rather than the more exact £8,699,000.

We have discussed from the outset the future of the homestead cottages with the HLF and they have always been keen for the project team to secure funding to enable their restoration. The HLF project manager will be pleased to learn of this change to the project as submitted at Round 2.

Issue 2: EA contribution

Interestingly too that she implies there is a monetary contribution from Environment Agency, which is not my understanding from talking to EA representatives who have been to see me as my house is directly impacted by the Flood Alleviation Scheme. EA informed me that they will be providing works in kind to the Council, but no money from them to the Council.

Response:

The EA will indeed be providing works in kind as a contribution to the project. Nevertheless, where these works are planned as part of the regeneration of the park, whether the works are provided in kind, or the money is provided to the Council for the Council's project team to spend, this amounts to a real contribution to the project budget, and is therefore reflected in the figures.

Issue 3: Contingency

She says there is a significant contingency built into the capital budget whereas the HLF case paper says the contingency seems rather light. Who should we believe?

A contingency of 12% has been allowed on building restoration works, 15% on waterbodies, 8% on landscaping and 5% on activity costs.

Overall this amounts to a contingency of £664,200 for the project.

Issue 4: Events

Section 9 comments from Sustainable Development Select Committee who raised a number of issues in April for officers to answer and report back to M&C. These issues were included in a report with numbered paragraphs, yet Ms Taylor has chosen not to refer to the numbered paragraphs in her response. Had she done so it would be immediately obvious that she has chosen not to answer one of the issues raised - her responses jump from 3.5 to 3.7 missing out 3.6. This chicanery, of course, will not be obvious to M&C. Her report will go to SDSC too, but after it has already been resolved

upon by M&C, so any challenge will be academic.

The issue ignored was the need for a management plan for dealing with large crowd events.

In addition to which, she has changed the wording of 3.7 - whereas SDSC referred to costs of large events should be recouped from the organisers, Ms Taylor has reworded to revenues being returned to the park, which are two entirely different concepts.

You will also note that she has contradicted herself by referring to a business plan for events in one response, but in another she says a large part of their strategy will be focussed on free events.

Response:

A management plan will be required by the Council for all events for over 500 people, in accordance with its events policy, and the practice of the Events Safety Advisory Group.

Conditions will also be imposed on the park's premises license which will require all events to address issues such as noise, traffic parking, waste, and safety in full before being granted permission to go ahead.

It is hoped that in the long term a variety of events will be held in the park, which will include free community events and some larger scale events which can make a significant revenue contribution to the Council. Over the next two years, as part of the strategy to build the audience for the park and attract new users to it, it is anticipated that most events held in Beckenham Place Park will be free community events.