



CABINET: 11 September 2018

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**Report of: Director of Leisure and Environment**

**Relevant Portfolio Holders: Councillor Y. Gagen**

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**SUBJECT: WATER ENVIRONMENT GRANT**

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Wards affected: All Skelmersdale Wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek delegated authority to accept an offer of external funding from the Water Environment Grant scheme operated by The Environment Agency and Natural England, to be used for the development of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in Tawd Valley Park ("the Grant").

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Director of Leisure and Environment be given delegated authority to formally accept the offer of a Water Environment Grant of up to £982,000, to be used in the Tawd Valley Park Project, and to take all necessary steps to comply with the terms of the Grant.
- 2.2 That call-in is not appropriate for this report as the matter is one requiring urgent action.

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## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 In 2017 Council approved a Masterplan looking at environmental and recreational improvements in Tawd Valley Park, Skelmersdale.(Cabinet Report:Tawd Valley Park Masterplan – 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017). The Masterplan looked at various ways in which we can provide new and improved recreational facilities, but also looked at ways of improving the local environment, including the water quality of the River Tawd.

- 3.2 The River Tawd suffers from diffuse urban pollution the source of which is difficult to access due to tributaries being culverted, therefore we concentrated on investigating end-of pipe solutions. With the support of the Environment Agency who provided funding of £15,000 to engage consultants to look at this issue, a study was undertaken. (Water Quality Options for Tawd Valley Park – May 2017)
- 3.3 The remit of this study was to improve the overall water quality of the River Tawd with particular emphasis on Tawd Valley Park, in order to create a family friendly public park providing a healthy environment with enhanced environmental habitats and increased amenity value
- 3.4 The first part of this study looked at the hydrology of the valley, assessed pollution sources, identified Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) opportunities, prioritised options, and shortlisted 5 priority locations. This number was subsequently reduced to 4 with the withdrawal of a site due to its proximity to the proposed Skelmersdale Town Centre development, and its high proposed costs. (see Appendix 1 – Proposed SUDS Locations in Tawd Valley Park).
- 3.5 The SUDS would be in the form of wetlands or ponds and would work by slowing the flow of water providing natural water treatment and flood management before the water is discharged into the river Tawd.
- 3.6 A further study was then undertaken to look at the prioritised SUDS and produce more detailed designs for each one, and full costings for their construction. Overall the cost of the construction of the 4 SUDS, including project management fees, totalled £982,000. (Tawd Valley Park Masterplan - High Level Design Report – July 2017).
- 3.7 The 4 prioritised SUDS were incorporated within the Tawd Valley Masterplan which was approved by Council in November 2017.

#### **4.0 CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The Water Environment Grant (WEG) scheme provides funding to improve the water environment in rural England. It is managed by the Environment Agency and Natural England and is part of the Rural Development Programme for England, on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Farming, and Rural Affairs ( DEFRA).
- 4.2 In May 2017 the Council made a bid to the WEG for £982,000 to enable it to implement the SUDS scheme as part of the Tawd Valley Park masterplan.
- 4.3 In September 2018 it is hoped that an offer will be made to the Council from the WEG to implement this scheme. One of the conditions of any offer is that the funders would require a formal acceptance within 30 days of the offer being made.

## **5.0 ISSUES**

5.1 In accepting the Grant the Council must comply and be able to comply with the terms and conditions of the Grant. The terms and conditions include the following:

- (a) The project must start by March 2019 and be completed by March 2021
- (b) The body giving the Grant (which will be EA or NE) ("the Grantor") will have the right to unilaterally vary the terms and conditions of the Grant
- (c) The Grantor will have the right to terminate the Grant if in its opinion the Council has breached the terms of the Grant or there is a change in circumstances affecting its eligibility to receive the Grant. In such a case, the Grantor can withhold or require repayment of the grant and/or apply reductions and penalties
- (d) The Grantor can terminate the Grant and any future payments due to the Council on six months' notice. Provided there is no breach, any payments already made to the Council will not have to be repaid to the Grantor.

## **6.0 PROPOSALS**

6.1 It is proposed that Cabinet give delegated authority to the Director of Leisure and Environment to accept this grant on behalf of the Council.

## **7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Acceptance of this grant funding will enable the Council to establish environmental improvements in Tawd Valley Park that will greatly improve the water quality of the river Tawd. It will also enable recreational improvements for the local community through the provision of footpaths, picnic areas, and improvement visual environment.

7.2 The scheme will also promote community engagement through on-going maintenance, water quality monitoring, and recreational activities for a wide range of community groups.

## **8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Implementation costs of this project have been established through the High Level Design Report previously mentioned in 3.6. The £982,000 grant bid incorporates the capital costs of construction of the 4 SUDS (£900,000) and the revenue costs of management fees to oversee the project.(£82,000).

8.2 The on-going maintenance costs of the project will be minimal, involving routine cleansing and litter removal, and small scale silt removal to ensure the effectiveness of the SUDS. These maintenance requirements will be covered by

existing revenue provision and co-ordinated by the Countryside Ranger Service involving community engagement through voluntary, Friends, and community groups.

## **9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 All SUDS will be subject to the granting of planning permission. Outline planning will be sought prior to the deadline for acceptance of the grant to ensure that the scheme can progress.
- 9.2 The extensive environmental and engineering works required to undertake this project will require external support. The cost of this support has been built into the funding bid with £82,000 of management fees stipulated as part of the full bid.
- 9.3 Funding will be supplied for the implementation of the schemes, there will also be a requirement for the on-going management and maintenance of the facilities. The Design Report undertaken in 2017 outlines maintenance requirements for the SUDS. Maintenance is limited to cleansing, reedbed maintenance, and occasional silt removal, all of which can be undertaken through the Ranger Service and the involvement of local voluntary, community and Friends groups, all of which will be provided with the required training and health and safety checks and procedures to ensure efficient and safe undertaking of the works.
- 9.4 The SUDS will be subject to the land they are to be constructed on being free of contamination or other unforeseen underground issues that would compromise the construction and effectiveness of the SUDS. Ground investigations will be undertaken prior to any works commencing and should issues of this nature occur the project on that land will not continue unless additional funding is made available through the WEG to mitigate their impact.

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### **Background Documents**

None

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Proposed SUDS Locations in Tawd Valley Park

## Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment