

BISHOPSTOKE, FAIR OAK & HORTON HEATH (BIFOHH) LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

Wednesday 23 November 2022

BIFOHH LOCAL AREA ACTION PLAN 2022/23 PROJECT PROGRESS REVIEW

Report of the Local Area Manager

Recommendation

It is recommended that Councillors note the progress of the projects in the BIFOHH Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) 2022/23

Summary

This report presents a high-level progress review on the projects set out in the BIFOHH LAAP 2022/23.

Statutory Powers

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 i.e. the Local Authority's general power of competence, including power to act for the benefit of its area or persons resident or present in its area.

Strategic Implications

1. This update report on the projects included in the LAAP 22/23 covers all of the key objectives in the Corporate Plan.

Background

2. The Council has agreed a set of Borough-wide objectives to improve quality of life for all. These are set out in the Corporate Plan 2015-25. The Council also seeks to enable decisions to be made at the most appropriate local level, most notably through the five Local Area Committees but also through our town and parish councils and other more local partnerships.
3. The Local Area Committee regularly approves a Community Investment Programme (CIP), which lists all the local projects and initiatives that the Local Area Committee and Parishes would like to deliver in the short, medium and long term. The list is used to negotiate section 106 contributions from developers which often form the majority of the funds required. These funds often need to be pooled from several developments over a number of years in order to achieve sufficient project budget.

4. All five Local Area Committees set out a shorter-term list of priorities for the financial year 22/23. The BIFOHH priorities are given in Appendix 1 within the BIFOHH Local Area Action Plan 2022/23. The Plan is used to determine budgets and resources as part of the Council's annual business planning cycle. This is also a public facing document and part of its purpose is transparency, enabling residents to understand what the committee is planning to achieve.
5. Local Area and Cabinet Councillors were consulted on the draft Plan earlier in the year, and it was then approved for adoption and publication in March 2022.

Project Progress Review

6. **Memorial Hall & Glebe Meadow Project** – *Develop the feasibility design for the Memorial Hall and submit for planning approval* – Following frustrations over the momentum of the project, Bishopstoke Parish Council (with the agreement of Eastleigh Borough Council) decided to re-tender the architectural services contract for the remainder of the design. All design work and intellectual data to date are owned by the project team, therefore all agreed that a fresh view was required. The project manager is currently preparing tender documentation to advertise on the portal. Once detailed boundary information is received, this advert will be advertised on the local portal.
7. The existing Memorial Hall had to be closed earlier in the year, due to it no longer being safe to hire. Given the concerns on insurance and safety, the decision has been taken to demolish the structure. The project manager is working with Bishopstoke Parish Council (BPC), awaiting final documentation, which will enable demolition hopefully in the coming months.
8. **Y Zone and Youth Project** - *Ensure smooth transition from internal to new external provider. Work with new provider to deliver a bold, modern, fit-for-purpose youth provision that targets young people most in need of support* – Youth Options began working with BIFOHH/BPC/Fair Oak & Horton Heath Parish Council (FOPC) in spring 2022. The contract with Youth Options, includes similar partnerships with ELAC and CFH.
9. Youth Options has so far mainly undertaken outreach work with young people in the area, engaging with smaller, more consistent groups in several locations. Areas in BIFOHH (and marginally outside) include The Hub, YZone and surrounding area, Glebe Meadow, Stoke Park Woods, Knowle Park, New Century Park and Lapstone playing fields.
10. Youth Options have used this time to collect data, meet with external partners (schools, Police, Community Development Officer) to piece together the information to enable a fit-for-purpose youth service in the area.
11. Due to some logistical problems with the Y Zone management, Youth Options have been unable to begin the centre-based activities. Working with the

FOPC clerk, the Local Area Manager is prioritising access to the Y Zone facility.

12. Youth Options provide a monthly report, detailing numbers of engagement with young people and logging topics of discussions and issues raised by them, to try and establish any patterns to help better direct resources. A six-month review was held with officers and Youth Options on 2nd November to understand what has worked well and what could be improved. Slight changes to the reporting mechanisms have been suggested to ensure the most relevant data is collected, whilst also allowing the youth workers maximum time with the young people.
13. **Lapstone Farm Cricket Provision** - *Set up project team and begin work to provide a second wicket on site for Fair Oak Cricket Club* – Arguably the greatest success thus far with the LAAP is the Lapstone Cricket Project. The project manager has now submitted its planning application, with an aim to being considered in March 2023.
14. Working in partnership with FOPC, Fair Oak Cricket Club, Sport England, the Football Association (FA) and English Cricket Board (ECB), and a number of consultants and internal officers, public consultations on the proposals were held in mid-October (99% of responses were very supportive).
15. Detailed mitigation plans for an improved net biodiversity gain have now been agreed and ball trajectory assessments and their mitigation have also been agreed and signed off, as well as understanding and working up contingency plans for the existing football and cricket clubs on site to continue to play their games during the construction. The project is now ahead of the LAAP aim, which was simply to set up the project team and start working up a project.
16. **Quobleigh Woods** - *Complete the transfer this countryside asset from the developer and work with the Council's Countryside team to bring the site up to standard, utilising the specialist inside knowledge* – Working in partnership with experts from the Countryside team ahead of the transfer, significant structures were discovered on the Quobleigh Woods site that require better understanding as to their potential impact on future maintenance.
17. The formal asset transfer with the developer has yet to be completed, given the identification of what is believed to be a dam from the former weir with associated structures within the wetland. A report to Corporate Leadership Board (CLB) is being prepared by the Local Area Manager, Head of Legal and Head of Assets for consideration and guidance.
18. **New Century Park Café and Splash Pad** - *Work in partnership with Fair Oak & Horton Heath Parish Council to deliver this exciting community asset* – Thanks to excellent project work by FOPC, the splashpad is now complete. There are some minor 'snagging' items that need rectifying, though these will be complete well ahead of the formal opening launch to the public on 6 May 2023.

19. The community café is slightly further behind schedule due to previously unknown ground conditions and procurement delays. These have been overcome with bore hole testing, with the likelihood of a pile-driven solution 10 – 12 metres down. Once a safe solution has been agreed, the project will proceed, with an estimated completion of summer 2023.
20. **Asset Transfers** - *complete all existing asset transfers for BIFOHH from the developer to the Council, and then to the appropriate Parish where relevant* – When new development is permitted within the local area, depending on the size of the development, significant open space, play areas and other community assets are transferred to the Council (and then sometimes onto the Parish Council) from the developer. Before they can be transferred into the Council's portfolio, the Council requires the assets to be of an acceptable standard.
21. Working with various developers over the years, many of the proposed assets in BIFOHH have not been deemed an acceptable standard. This has caused significant delays from the developer to the Council, and then from the Council to the Parish Council. The Council's enforcement officers have worked with the project team to hold the developers to account, with varying success.
22. BIFOHH has six significant outstanding asset transfers, some stretching back five years. Whilst this is not ideal, four of these assets that have been eventually deemed acceptable to transfer are currently being managed and maintained by the appropriate Parish Council on licence, with the associated commuted sums and adjustments to the Parish precepts in place. The formal legal transfer, however, is yet to take place.
23. However, there are other transfers that do not yet have an interim solution in place. Bow Lake Gardens and The Chase sites in Bishopstoke, (allotments, play area, open space and cemetery extension) still need a resolution. These sites have been prioritised for action by the Council, but some challenges recruiting to certain roles mean that progress has temporarily stalled.
24. Both the BiFOHH LAC Chair and the Clerk of Bishopstoke Parish Council have contacted the Chief Executive to express their dissatisfaction with progress on Bow Lake Gardens and the Chase in particular.
25. **Planney and Tree Corridor Project** - *Complete the revitalisation of the Planney woodland and the Tree Corridor project, which aims to tackle climate change and increase wildlife habitats* – The Tree and Bee Corridor is on schedule and is a great example of delivering the green agenda, a key priority for the BIFOHH LAC. Linking larger wooded areas in the Bishopstoke area with smaller green spaces, rewilding is being achieved by creating pockets of green within housing estates, on land, which is otherwise desolate, and for only a very few local residents to enjoy. The new proposed green areas comprise trees, shrubs, climbers and ground flora which are both edible and provide fodder and habitat for wildlife.

26. Information leaflets were designed and delivered to the houses surrounding the proposed planting sites (Stoke Park Road, Underwood Road, East Drive and Escombe Road). During follow up visits to the areas, the projects were discussed with those residents who were at home. The feedback was very positive, and residents are generally keen to get involved. An EBC email address was also handed out with the leaflets to encourage people to contact EBC, with a view to getting involved with the planting and maintenance. Some residents said they would post the leaflet on their social sites to drum up more interest. It would be desirable to establish 'working groups' or 'friends of groups' for future longevity and sustainability - such as helping with watering and weeding etc.
27. The planting season runs until March and the Council's consultant will endeavour to get the above sites planted up before this date. Soil samples have been taken, and orders for the trees and shrubs are in, so help with setting up the planting would be fantastic community engagement.
28. The planting sites will then evolve dynamically, with the trees forming the structural framework, local residents can plant in between them to effectively create community allotment gardens. Mowing will therefore be restricted to the maintenance of footpaths and walk-ways will need to be cut through longer sections of a wildflower meadow.
29. The improvements to the Planney (a small strip of woodland linking Edward Avenue and Church Road) have been a key early success with the LAAP and a key larger site of the Tree Corridor Project. The new Community Development Officer, alongside the Tree consultant have engaged with local schools, the community payback service and local residents to breathe new life into this forgotten green lung.
30. Foliage has been stripped back, essential tree maintenance undertaken, a new fence and gates at the Edward Avenue side installed and high-quality animal woodcarvings and wood benches erected, following community engagement with local schools and a local artist.
31. All that remains at the Planney is for the new management plan to be presented back to Direct Services to enable the area is kept up to the standard it is now.
32. **Public Art** - Produce a *Public Art Strategy for the local area and deliver public art projects in a joined-up approach, that reflect the history and essence of the local villages* – A draft public art vision for the BIFOHH area has been produced and presented to BIFOHH and the Parish Council clerks and chairs early in the summer. The general themes picked up in the vision are along the lines and thinking of the Committee, however, some of the wording needs to be revisited, as well as the detail.
33. The Council's internal Urban Landscape and Design (UL&D) officers are putting together a response to the issues raised at the presentation. A new Public Art Officer has been employed and will also engage with this work.

Financial Implications

34. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

35. The Equality Act is relevant to the decision in this report as the decision relates to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, or fostering good relations between different people. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out, because while there are some equalities impacts, it is not proportionate to carry out a full EIA.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

36. The BIFOHH local area committee (LAC) is fully focused on improving the environment and tackling climate change. The first key priority in the 22/23 LAAP states the climate emergency and commits the LAC will ensure impacts on the environment and climate change are central in their thinking. This overarching priority seeks to ensure a wraparound commitment for every project and committee decision.

Conclusion

37. The report asks Councillors to note its content of the high-level project progress review of the BIFOHH Local Area Action Plan 22/23.

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LOCAL AREA MANAGER

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Appendices Attached: 1

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

Background Papers – Eastleigh Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-25