

14. ALMONDVALE PARK STUDY, LIVINGSTON

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development advising of the outcome of consultation on the Almondvale Park Study, Livingston and to advise of development opportunities within the park.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development explained that Aitkens were commissioned to undertake a study of Almondvale Park with the findings being reported to the Livingston South Local Area Committee on 23 September 2011. The study concluded that there was no sense of arrival to the park, access routes were in poor condition and acted as barriers to movement and there were too many entrances. However in terms of strengths the park was in a central location acting as a green corridor and was well located for public transport. In addition the study identified possible funding bodies to carry out improvements and advised that there were opportunities for redevelopment of areas which were currently under-utilised.

The study was subject to public consultation over a nine week period and all community councils in Livingston were contacted and a dedicated web page was set up to allow for the submission of comments. The consultants had made nineteen recommendations for park improvements and interested parties were invited to comment on these and indicate those they would most like to see being carried out.

By far the top priority for improvement was to convert the existing amphitheatre into a natural play area for the park. Other priorities included lighting and decorating underpasses to make them feel safer and the creation plazas for socialising. Additionally as the majority of proposals were mostly directly to the south of Howden Park the idea of linking Almondvale Park with Howden Park to create a larger Town Park for the centre of Livingston was also suggested.

Development opportunities and funding for improvements were also explored in the report and these included a lottery funding application, development of community partnerships and the sell-off of council assets.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development continued to explain that all Livingston members were invited to a site walkover on 17 January and all were generally supportive of the need to make more of the park and improve the environment.

The report concluded that the results of the consultation indicated that there was broad support to undertake park improvements and the favoured option to fund these was to develop partnerships with local groups and seek funding for specific projects. The establishment of such a group would allow for further investigations to be made on funding sources. In the interim it was recommended that a series of tidy up measures be implemented, within the park, subject to availability of funding within existing budgets and that the council's Estate Manager would be asked to explore further the sale of the site number 3.

It was recommended that the Council Executive :-

- Note the contents of the report;
- Support the release of site 3 identified in the Almondvale Park Study for development;
- Agree that a planning brief, complementary to the surrounding park area, be prepared for site 3 identified in the Almondvale Park Study for development, should the council decide to move forward with site disposal;
- Agree to remit to the Head of Operational Services to investigate all possible funding streams for delivery of park improvements and report the outcome back to the Environment PDSP at a future date;
- Agree to remit to the Head of Operational Services to investigate the potential of developing partnerships with local groups and expanding the remit of these groups or setting up of a dedicated group for Almondvale Park and that progress be reported back to the Environment PDSP at a future date; and

#### Decision

To approve the terms of the report