

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Valley Gardens Consultation &amp; Progress Report</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> July 2012</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director Place</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Jim Mayor</b>	<b>Tel: 294164</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>St Peters &amp; North Laine, Hannover, Queens Park, Regency</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 In November 2011 the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Cabinet Members Meeting (CMM) instructed officers to develop a vision and delivery plan for enhancement of Valley Gardens by March 2012.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Committee notes the results of initial scoping consultation and agrees the resulting design brief for the project.
- 2.2 That Committee authorises officers to develop a draft design option(s) ahead of public consultation as set out in the main body of the report.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 In November 2011 the Cabinet Member for Transport & Public Realm “authorised officers to progress the development of initial design proposals and a delivery strategy for the Valley Gardens Enhancement Scheme, incorporating stakeholder engagement and consultation” at the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Cabinet Members Meeting.
- 3.2 Enhancing Valley Gardens has been an objective of the council for a number of years. The council’s second Local Transport Plan [LTP2], published in 2006, included proposals for a major urban realm scheme in this corridor towards the end of the planned 5-year investment programme. However, reductions in funding levels prevented proposals from being developed and implemented as originally planned.
- 3.3 The November report stated that should members agree the recommendation, “initial work (would) focus on gathering public and stakeholder opinions and using this information, together with the analysis already carried out, to produce a Design Brief”. “The Brief (would) then inform design of a preferred concept scheme that is practical, costed, and phasable. A number of concept scheme

options will be developed. These will be presented to the Cabinet Member in autumn/winter 2012, along with a request for approval to conduct final consultation in order to identify a preferred scheme approach”.

- 3.4 During early 2012, online scoping consultation has taken place with local residents, complemented by scoping workshops with stakeholders and residents. This has informed a Design Brief Note, which, alongside the Public Realm Analysis presented at November CMM, forms the Design Brief for Valley Gardens. The Design Brief Note, along with a summary of feedback from the public, officer and stakeholder scoping consultation, is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.5 In general, Public, Officer and Stakeholder consultation has supported rather than contradicted the observations made in the Public Realm Analysis document. Aspirations for the Valley Gardens area are also broadly similar across all consultees – reflecting a desire for an enhanced ‘place’ within a simplified transport arrangement.
- 3.6 There is a strong desire for the ‘place’ function of the Gardens to be developed around a ‘green, natural oasis’ with strong north south and east west connections for all users. This general consensus limits the range of options for usage that will need to be tested during future stages of consultation. Rather the consultation can focus on ratifying / testing opinion to variations on a broadly generic theme. (The underlying, natural theme for the Gardens future character also complements the council’s Biosphere aspirations, and links between the two projects will therefore be made wherever possible).
- 3.7 It is important to identify the most appropriate method of engaging the local community in the ongoing Valley Gardens design process. There is no value to the design process or the local community in a consultation process that simply fulfils a ‘box ticking’ exercise. However, there is a real benefit in an approach that achieves an optimal blend of specialist skills of the design team with the detailed local knowledge of the community.
- 3.8 The consultation process has already commenced successfully with the scoping workshops and consultation that have informed development of the design brief set out in Appendix 1. It is recommended that the most appropriate way forward is for the design team to develop a reasonably detailed and (transport) tested proposal(s) based on that design brief which can be presented to the local community at feedback workshops in September. Thereafter a process of further iterative workshops will take place until an optimal design has been identified and agreed.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Full public consultation (via the consultation portal) has been undertaken to test initial views on general aspects of the Gardens’ existing and potential future roles as a movement corridor and a public place. The consultation approach has been developed with the environment initiative’s team to ensure a good practise, inclusive approach has been followed. The full consultation has been supported by stakeholder and officer workshops, which bring professional insight to the process.

- 4.2 The Committee Decision requested will enable further public input into the design process. This reflects the importance the design team place on community involvement in identifying the most successful design solution for city spaces.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Capital: The Department for Transport has allocated £6.466 million to Brighton and Hove for the 2012-13 Local Transport Plan. £0.150 million of this allocation has been set aside for Valley Gardens.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw Date: 15/06/12*

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Transport Act 2000, as subsequently amended by the Local Transport Act 2008, introduced a statutory requirement for local transport authorities to produce a Local Transport Plan [LTP], to keep the LTP under review and to alter the LTP if considered appropriate. The LTP provides the policy framework for capital investment in schemes and measures to maintain, manage and improve the city's transport network.

The council has to follow the rules on consultation set out by the government and the courts. The council needs to ensure that any consultation process is carried out at a time when proposals are still at their formative stage, that sufficient reasons and adequate time are given to allow intelligent consideration and responses and that responses are properly taken into account in finalising any proposals.

The preparation of and recommendations set out in this report have had due regard to the legal requirements referred to above. It is not considered that any adverse human rights implications arise from the report.

*Lawyer Consulted: Carl Hearsom Date: 12/06/12*

### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An EIA will be undertaken as part of the Design Process.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Due to the project being at an early stage in the design process, it is not yet possible to identify specific elements of the final vision. However, the general aspirations of the project incorporate enhanced ecological environments, reduced noise and air pollution, enhanced access for the community to natural places and greater choice / fewer barriers to more sustainable movement choices (through an enhanced walking and cycling environment etc). The project will be developed to complement the council's Biosphere objectives.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 As above, it is too early to identify specific elements related to crime and disorder. However, the need to design out fear of crime, be mindful of the less savoury aspects of the Gardens' current environment and learn management / maintenance lessons from the Pavilion Gardens have been identified in the design brief.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 A business case and delivery plan will be presented to committee in March 2013 alongside the agreed Valley Gardens vision. In the meantime, the design team are working with relevant stakeholders and monitoring potential funding sources to ensure any short term opportunities to complement the overall Valley Gardens ambition are identified. For example, funding to contribute towards physical improvements between Elm Grove and St Peters has been secured through a Better Bus Areas funding bid.

#### Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 It is envisaged that most of the public health benefits to be achieved through the project will relate to removing barriers to more sustainable (and healthy) modes of travel, such as walking and cycling, and enhancing public access to natural spaces (with associated physical and emotional wellbeing benefits).

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The project process and aspiration for an enhanced Valley Gardens environment would contribute towards the council priorities of:
- Tackling Inequality
  - Creating a More Sustainable City
  - Engaging People who Live and Work in the City

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 This report seeks agreement of the design brief informed by scoping consultation, and approval that a design(s) should be developed ahead of further consultation with the community. There are no sensible alternatives to developing a design brief at commencement of the project. The design team need to work up a design option(s) if the project objective of delivering an agreed vision for the Valley Gardens is to be achieved. Using workshops to facilitate face to face community comment on design options prepared by the design team is considered the most effective way of combining local and design team skills.

### **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The report recommendation enables the public to be engaged in a design process previously agreed by the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Cabinet Members Meeting, whilst first enabling members to ratify the rationale behind the options suggested for consultation.



## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Design Brief Note and Summary of Scoping Consultation

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis