

CABINET MEETING – 14 MARCH 2024
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

RIVERSIDE PARK, RIVERSIDE SUNDERLAND

Author(s):

Report of the Executive Director of City Development

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the proposed design and delivery strategy for Riverside Park and to seek approval to progress with the procurement and appointment of the resources required to deliver the initial phases of this key element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Authorise the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City, and the Director of Finance, to take all necessary steps to procure the delivery of parcels 2,3 and 7 of Riverside Park as identified on the plan in Appendix 1 (“the Scheme”), including the award of all construction contracts and any other relevant professional appointments; and
- (ii) Authorise the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City, and the Director of Finance, to approve any subsequent variations to any construction contracts as may be required to deliver the Scheme subject always to adequate funding being available within the approved project budget.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

Riverside Park is a critical element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan providing high quality green space and biodiversity to support the creation of a new urban quarter at the heart of the city.

Parcels 2 and 3 form the new southern entrance to Riverside Park, facilitate the completion of the landscape environment and the sustainable urban drainage system, and the formation of Kingsley Gardens, a new community garden, which will serve the

new and existing residential neighbourhoods and support the city's drive towards healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.

Parcel 7 will unlock a new community and event space and create connectivity between the residential development and the River Wear.

Collectively the Scheme will create an accessible new community and family orientated social and activity space that will create added value, and be a key marketing tool, for prospective residents and employers moving into Riverside Sunderland.

The Council's Constitution requires prior Cabinet approval for the procurement and award of contracts where the value of a proposed procurement exceeds £500,000. Procurement needs to commence imminently in order that the spaces can be constructed and can mature prior to opening of Riverside Park and occupation of the first residential dwellings and hosting public events and activations in 2025.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

- (i) Not to deliver the Scheme.
This option has been considered and is recommended to be rejected as Riverside Park is a critical element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan and is essential for the delivery of biodiversity net gain as well as supporting the Council's wider objective to deliver healthy active lifestyles for local people.
- (ii) Seek cabinet approval once the procurement process has been completed.
This option has been considered and is recommended to be rejected as it does not align with the Council's constitution and any delay would mean that the community facilities and public open space would not be delivered or have matured in time for occupation of the new residential properties and could also jeopardise the ability to hold city centre events and activations in 2025.

Impacts analysed;

Equality Yes Privacy No Sustainability Yes Crime and Disorder Yes

Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? Yes

Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes

RIVERSIDE PARK, RIVERSIDE SUNDERLAND**Report of the Executive Director of City Development****1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the proposed design and delivery strategy for Riverside Park and to seek approval to progress with the procurement and appointment of the resources required to deliver the initial phases of this key element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan.

2.0 Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Authorise the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City, and the Director of Finance, to take all necessary steps to procure the delivery of parcels 2,3 and 7 of Riverside Park as identified on the plan in Appendix 1 (“the Scheme”), including the award of all construction contracts and any other relevant professional appointments; and
- (ii) Authorise the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City, and the Director of Finance, to approve any subsequent variations to any construction contracts as may be required to deliver the Scheme subject always to adequate funding being available within the approved project budget.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Riverside Park covers an area of approximately 13.7 hectares spanning both sides of the River Wear and accounts for almost half of the total Riverside Sunderland site area. Historically due its isolated location it has suffered from a lack of occupation and neglect resulting in it becoming overgrown with non-native species and being recognised as a hub for anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 The Council’s approved Capital Programme includes budget provision for the design and delivery of Riverside Sunderland Infrastructure. This includes the delivery of a new Riverside Park to act as a sustainable green space with enhanced highway and footpath infrastructure to improve accessibility and connectivity and promote wellbeing and inclusion.
- 3.3 In October 2020 the Council launched the Riverside Sunderland Masterplan which set out its ambition for the regeneration of former industrial land on the banks of the River Wear to create a new carbon neutral urban quarter at the heart of the city. The Riverside Sunderland masterplan comprises five strategic development areas at Vaux, Farringdon Row, Ayre’s Quay, Sheepfolds and the Heart of the City which are connected by a transformed

Riverside Park that will be an invaluable resource for the Riverside Sunderland community and a recreational asset for people who work nearby or visit the city centre.

- 3.4 In December 2020 the Council adopted the Riverside Sunderland Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which provides the planning policy framework for the consideration of development proposals within Riverside Sunderland. The SPD notes that Riverside Park will have four distinct zones: Kingsley Gardens and Galley's Gill which run northeast from Silksworth Row down to the river and the two riverside strips (Lambton Riverside and Wearmouth Riverside) on either side of the Wear, contributing significantly to the Council's place making and sustainable development principles. It foresees Riverside Park as being a network of green spaces and corridors that enhance ecological value, allow the development to achieve biodiversity net gain, and provide an important landscape corridor and wildlife habitat.
- 3.5 Significant intervention and investment is required to create a landscaped and accessible park that will become the focal point of the new communities at Riverside Sunderland. Construction of community gardens, play equipment, commercial outlets and restoration of the river frontage will enhance Riverside Sunderland as a residential and employment location, attracting inward investment to the city and providing high quality jobs. It will also create a destination for sport, health, recreation, and events attracting visitors from across the city and wider north east region.
- 3.6 Over the last two winter periods the Council has completed a programme of ecological improvement works to strip away non-native and invasive species and create a more natural landscape environment in Riverside Park. This has revealed the full extent of the park and allowed a better understanding of the topography and physical constraints that will guide its future restoration and redevelopment.
- 3.7 A new Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) infrastructure has been designed and constructed by the Lead Local Flood Authority to provide flood risk management and surface water discharge for the new development in the Vaux and Farrington Row neighbourhoods.
- 3.8 The Council's landscape architects, and registered ecologists have been working closely with an external design consultant One Environments Limited to develop the concept proposals in the Riverside Sunderland masterplan to form a landscape design solution and delivery strategy for Riverside Park.

4.0 Current Position

- 4.1 Given the scale and diversity of Riverside Park, the design proposal has been split into a series of character areas to ensure delivery can be sequential and coordinated with the ongoing development activity and the approved budgets within the Council's capital programme.
- 4.2 The layout plan in Appendix 1 demonstrates the proposed subdivision of the 31 parcels and that appropriate delivery can be achieved alongside the wider

Riverside Sunderland masterplan developments. The Park has been split into the following 31 plot parcels, depicted in Appendix 1 that will come together to form the completed Riverside Park. A consistent palette of materials will be utilised across the parcels and character areas to ensure a cohesive landscape solution is delivered.

- 4.3 Some works have already been completed to Parcel 1 as part of the delivery of the new Riverside Sunderland Multi Storey Car Park and the works to Parcels 2, 3 and 7 have been determined to be the next priority as they support the formation of the southern gateway to Riverside Park, the completion of the SUDS, the creation of Kingsley Gardens, the delivery of critical utilities infrastructure and events space, and deliver ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gain in relation to the initial wave of development at Vaux and Farringdon Row.
- 4.4 Detailed designs and planting plans have been completed for Parcels 2,3 and 7 and include proposals for new footpaths, gateways, terracing, walkways street furniture, lighting and planting.

Parcel 2 – Southern Gateway & Water Gardens

- 4.4.1 Galley's Gill will provide the main southern entrance gateway to Riverside Park. Natural stone boundary walls will create a strong sense of arrival, screen the park from the adjacent road, segregate vehicle and pedestrian movements, define the water gardens and give structure and prominence to the park entrance. Wherever possible the walls will be constructed utilising stone recovered from historical structures within the park and will incorporate architectural lit metal ribs to maximise visibility and interest around the entrance area.
- 4.4.2 Hard and soft landscaping around the previously constructed SUDS ponds will create terraced seating areas with feature lighting and hardy, low maintenance, drought tolerant planting will be utilised in and around the ponds to enhance biodiversity and sustainability and create a sculptured landscape and create natural habitats. A computer generated image of Parcel 2 is attached in Appendix 2.

Parcel 3 – Kingsley Gardens

- 4.4.3 Kingsley Gardens will be a key community space within Riverside Park. It will provide a flexible growing and gardening hub for residents from the surrounding new and existing communities. It will be a valuable educational resource to educate local people around healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, and food sustainability.
- 4.4.4 Kingsley Gardens will comprise allotments, a community orchard, and high-quality landscaping. It will have a secure boundary, accessible footpaths, raised planting beds, storage areas and pergolas. Sensory planting will be incorporated within the landscaping which will blend seamlessly into the adjacent planting in Parcel 2.

- 4.4.5 A community gardening event is being planned in Spring 2025 as part of the Expo Sunderland programme and this will be the start of a community engagement programme providing an opportunity local residents, stakeholders and community groups to shape and complete the design, delivery and management of Kingsley Gardens. A computer generated image of Parcel 3 is attached in Appendix 3.

Parcel 7 – Social and Event Space

- 4.4.6 Parcel 7 will comprise a large social and event space between the Gill Bridge and the river corridor. The initial phase of work will include the formation of a large green and the installation of utilities and drainage to service future event and logistical requirements. The space will be semi-naturalised with areas to relax and socialise and will support pop-up events and activations that bring the space to life and attract footfall to the park.
- 4.4.7 Subject to securing additional funding, further activations will be delivered following the completion of the New Wear Footbridge and associated infrastructure. The masterplan proposes the construction of a riverside café, the formation of a visitor attraction in the former railway tunnel portals, the creation of an ornamental garden which is inspired by and showcases the local geology and flora, the creation of a new riverside amphitheatre which would provide seating and views of the river and provide an attractive area to watch performances and events hosted on the river and the north bank.
- 4.5 Subject to further funding, the remainder of the parcels will be designed and delivered sequentially as the surrounding Community is developed and constructed, to avoid any abortive work and/or damage to high value materials and street furniture. Further design and planning processes will continue in a phased approach and be detailed, as appropriate, in future reports to Cabinet.

5.0 Management and Maintenance

- 5.1 A comprehensive management and maintenance plan is being prepared for the entire Riverside Sunderland estate and the management of Riverside Park will be covered within those arrangements. This will ensure the park remains an attractive and accessible space, enhances ecology and habitat, and engages the local community, stakeholder groups and specialist organisations in the stewardship and activation of the spaces and facilities created.
- 5.2 The Expo Sunderland programme will be used to promote the transformed Riverside Park, the health and lifestyle benefits it will bring, and engage the community and stakeholders in the design and management solutions.
- 5.3 The Council will explore the most effective corporate structure / delivery model for the management and funding of the long-term maintenance and activation of Riverside Park to determine a solution that maximises quality and minimises Council revenue requirements, and any necessary approvals will be secured from Cabinet at the appropriate point.

6.0 Procurement Strategy and Timetable

- 6.1 The Council is targeting the completion of the initial phase of works within Riverside Park and achieving maturity of initial planting and landscaping by summer 2025 to support the delivery of a Riverside Festival which coincides with the Women's Rugby World Cup event scheduled at the Stadium of Light.
- 6.2 The total estimated cost for delivery of the Scheme is £5.628m. The Council's constitution requires prior Cabinet approval for the procurement and award of contracts where the value of a proposed procurement exceeds £500,000.
- 6.3 The following tables summarises the critical path, subject to Cabinet approval for the Scheme, through procurement and delivery of the construction works to achieve the Summer 2025 milestone.

Task	Timescales
Procurement of a Construction Contractor	March – June 2024
Commencement of Public & Stakeholder Engagement	May 2024
Appointment of Construction Contractor	June 2024
Construction works to Parcels 2&3	July 2024 – February 2025
Drainage, Utilities Installation and formation of Parcel 7	September - December 2024
Completion of Construction Works	March - August 2025
City Events	August 2025

7.0 Reasons for the Decision

- 7.1 Riverside Park is a critical element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan providing high quality green space and biodiversity to support the creation of a new urban quarter at the heart of the city.
- 7.2 Parcels 2 and 3 form the new southern entrance to Riverside Park, facilitate the completion of the landscape environment and the sustainable urban drainage system, and the formation of Kingsley Gardens, a new community garden, which will serve the new and existing residential neighbourhoods and support the city's drive towards healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.
- 7.3 Parcel 7 will unlock a new community and event space and create connectivity between the residential development and the River Wear.
- 7.4 Collectively the Scheme will create an accessible new community and family orientated social and activity space that will create added value, and be a key marketing tool, for prospective residents and employers moving into Riverside Sunderland.
- 7.5 The Council's Constitution requires prior Cabinet approval for the procurement and award of contracts where the value of a proposed procurement exceeds £500,000. Procurement needs to commence imminently in order that the spaces can be constructed and can mature prior to opening of Riverside Park,

occupation of the first residential dwellings, and hosting public events and activations in 2025.

8.0 Alternative Options

8.1 Not to deliver the Scheme.

This option has been considered and is recommended to be rejected as Riverside Park is a critical element of the Riverside Sunderland masterplan and is essential for the delivery of biodiversity net gain as well as supporting the Council's wider objective to deliver healthy active lifestyles for local people.

8.2 Seek cabinet approval once the procurement process has been completed.

This option has been considered and is recommended to be rejected as it does not align with the Council's constitution and any delay would mean that the community facilities and public open space would not be delivered or have matured in time for occupation of the new residential properties and could also jeopardise the ability to hold city centre events and activations in 2025.

9.0 Impact Analysis

9.1 Equalities

Any impacts will be analysed and addressed within the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment. It is expected that the improvements in streetscape, facilities and accessibility will have a positive effect on equality.

9.2 Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)

There are no privacy impacts identified as part of the proposals.

9.3 Sustainability

The Scheme delivers habitat improvement, flood risk management and water quality treatment, and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and ecological mitigation relating to the surrounding developments at Riverside Sunderland. Materials and planting have been designed to be robust and low maintenance and the creation of Kingsley Gardens supports the Council's Good Food Charter. The creation of a high-quality well-maintained space will support the long-term sustainability of Riverside Park.

9.4 Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion

The proposals have been designed and developed in consultation with the Council's Security Manager and the improvements in accessibility, lighting, activation, and natural surveillance, will increase footfall, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and create an attractive inclusive destination for social interaction and community cohesion.

10.0 Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations

10.1 Co-operative Values

The delivery of Riverside Park as part of the Riverside Sunderland Masterplan is consistent with the Council's co-operative values.

10.2 Financial Implications

The total estimated cost of the Scheme is £5.628m which can be funded from the existing allocation for Riverside Sunderland Infrastructure within the Council's approved capital programme.

10.3 Risk Analysis

A fully costed risk register has been produced during the design development process and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis throughout the delivery of the Scheme.

10.4 Legal Implications

The works will be procured in compliance with the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015 as appropriate.

10.5 Health & Safety Considerations

The works are to be procured using contractors experienced in work of this nature who have satisfied the minimum health and safety requirements identified within the Council's procurement procedures. The Construction Design and Management (CDM) Regulations apply and the appropriate resources have been procured to satisfy the Council's role as Client under the regulations.

10.6 Property Implications

None

10.7 The Public / External Bodies

Extensive public and stakeholder engagement will commence following Cabinet approval and continue throughout the delivery and operation of the Scheme.

10.8 Procurement

The Council's Corporate Procurement team has completed a Procurement Strategy and will oversee the procurement of the construction contractor which will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations 2015.

11.0 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Riverside Park Layout Plan & Character Areas

Appendix 2 – CGI of Parcel 2 - Southern Gateway & Water Gardens

Appendix 3 - CGI of Parcel 3 – Kingsley Gardens

11.0 Background Papers

Riverside Sunderland Masterplan

Riverside Sunderland Supplementary Planning Document

