

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 20 April 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director - Community & Greenspace

**PORTFOLIO:** Environment and Urban Renewal

**SUBJECT:** Creation of Café Facility at Pickerings Pasture

**WARD(S)** Ditton, Hale Village and Halebank

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek approval to provide a café facility at Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which would be operated as a franchise.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;**

- 2.1 (i) **The proposal to open a café facility at Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve which would be operated as a franchise opportunity, as outlined within the report, be approved;**
- (ii) **Council be asked to include £520,000 within the Council's Capital Programme to fund the construction of the café facility.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Pickerings Pasture LNR is one of the Council's busiest public parks. Located on the banks of the River Mersey it offers spectacular views of the Mersey Estuary in a green and pleasant environment. The popular Trans-Pennine Trail route also passes through the site.

3.2 Currently there is a portacabin type of facility located on site which has public toilets and meeting rooms. The facility has been there for more than 30 years and is in poor condition. It is currently used by the Friends of Pickerings Pasture who open it as and when they can.

3.3 Pre-Covid, the Friends of Pickerings Pasture operated a pop up café in the portacabin building which was popular with the visiting public. The venture was operated by volunteers and opening times could not be guaranteed. Discussions were held with the Friends of

Pickerings Pasture with regards to the creation of a new café building and they are supportive of the idea.

- 3.4 The Council is contacted regularly by third parties who want to operate a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR.
- 3.5 In the knowledge that the portacabin facility was coming to the end of its expected life, two years ago Property Services were asked to look at options for creating a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR. A design was created (see appendix 1) with some indicative costs. As the Covid pandemic was still ongoing there was no progression at that time.
- 3.6 The demand for a café and the interest by third parties to provide one did not go away. The Operational Director (Community & Greenspace) was asked to look at ways in which a café facility might be delivered.
- 3.7 The café facility as proposed (appendix 1) is estimated to cost £520,000. If £520,000 was provided from the Capital Programme and was funded over seven years, the capital financing cost would be £87,500 per annum. Subject to Members approval, the intention would be to submit an application to the INEOS Environment Fund for £87,500 for a period of seven years to cover the capital financing costs.
- 3.8 The intention would be to have the franchisee on a 'Full Repair and Insuring' (FRI) lease to avoid the Council having any ongoing revenue liabilities in respect of the building. Once completed and opened the café would generate income for the Council from the franchise rental, which could be used to offset the running costs of Pickerings Pasture.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications with regards to this proposal.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The proposal to create a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR would add £520,000 to the Councils Capital Programme. It is proposed that this would be funded over a seven year period at a capital financing cost of £87,500 per annum. A bid would be made to the Environment Fund in order to provide the necessary funding of £87,500 per annum for seven years.
- 5.2 The new café facility would be advertised as a franchise opportunity in common with the facilities that already operate in that way at

Phoenix Park, Runcorn Hill Park and at Victoria Park. All of these facilities generate income for the Council which is used to offset the running costs of its public parks.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

The creation of a café facility at Pickerings Pasture LNR will contribute to this priority as it will allow families to spend longer at the park in a clean and healthy environment. At present the lack of public toilets and refreshment facilities limit the time that visitors can spend at the location.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The operator of a café facility will need to employ new staff and train them accordingly. The facility will also need to procure supplies and services locally. The existing franchised facilities within the Council's public parks have created new jobs that are stable and secure.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The provision of café facilities within public parks, with their public toilets, has resulted in an increase in visitor numbers every time it has been implemented. More visits to parks means more people taking healthy exercise and gaining the benefits of being in a green environment which is proven to be beneficial for mental health.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Busier public parks always lead to safer public parks. Positive use deters misuse. The presence of a staffed café within a park helps to create the feeling of a safer environment and it also brings a level of supervision that would otherwise not be possible.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Pickerings Pasture LNR was opened in the mid-1980s. It has proved to be a popular facility since then but the infrastructure, such as the present underused portacabin facility, is getting old and worn out. The provision of a new building at this park would significantly enhance this area of the Borough.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The key risk would be failure to secure money from the Environment Fund.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The proposal would make a positive impact on Climate Change by creating a facility within a local park, Pickerings Pasture LNR, that would be attractive to local people and would thereby reduce the number of miles that people would have to travel.

Pickerings Pasture is accessible by bus.

The new building would be far more energy efficient than the existing facility and could be made more so if required.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

There are none under the meaning of the Act.