

ENVIRONMENT & HIGHWAYS CABINET BOARD

REPORT OF HEAD OF STREETCARE, MIKE ROBERTS

29TH JANUARY 2015

SECTION A – MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

PROGRESS WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL SAVINGS WITHIN THE GNOLL COUNTRY PARK

Purpose of Report

To inform Members of progress in achieving savings within the Gnoll Country Park, as contained within the Forward Financial Plan.

Background

The Gnoll Country Park has successfully maintained Green Flag status and is an important attraction to Neath Port Talbot. However, due to current financial pressures, the authority is required to look at efficiency savings within the park as in all other areas. Consideration has therefore been given to reducing the net cost to the Council of £200,000 in providing the facility.

In considering the options available, total closure of the park would realise the maximum savings, however, alternative options have been developed which would still achieve substantial savings, of £142,000 whilst retaining the popular facility. These were set out in the Cabinet report of 10th September 2014, further to which consultation has now taken place with the trade unions and staff concerning staff related savings. The identified savings keeps the park, toilets, visitors centre and café open and available to the public to visit and enjoy.

Savings

As set out in the previous Cabinet report, savings included:

1. Closing the shop/information desk and introduce vending machines for popular purchases such as duck food, with a reduction of two full time posts.

2. Installing two pay and display units within the car park, reducing two full time posts.
3. Deletion of the Managing Ranger's post, with duties being distributed to other staff.

Five members of staff are affected by these changes, and following consultations, four have been offered redeployment within the Council and one considering retirement.

In addition to the above, charges are due to be increased as per attached Delegated Authority from 1st April 2015. It is noted the annual season ticket still offers excellent value for money for regular users of the park. The increased charges are expected to increase income by £40,000.

Implementation of the above measures in total achieves the £142k saving contained within the Forward Financial Plan and moves the facility towards a balanced budget position allowing the park to continue operating with minor impact to services.

Petition.

A petition to retain the information desk has been received containing approximately 800 signatures. This petition is in relation to concerns that visitors will lose the ability to report hazards and problems within the park, downgrading the visitor attraction.

Keeping this facility open would cost over £40,000 per year and therefore fail to achieve the required savings, consequently it is not proposed to change the identified measures.

The content of the petition has been noted and the ability to report such issues will be made available direct on site at the café or by telephone with the relevant contact number being displayed within the visitor centre.

List of Background Papers

Cabinet Report – Financial savings within the Gnoll Country Park, 14th September 2014.

Delegated Decision Report – Gnoll Country Park Car Parking Fees and Charges 2015/16.

Petition – To retain the Information Desk at the Gnoll Country Estate January 2015

Officer Contact

Mike Roberts

Head of Streetcare

☎ 01639 686966

✉ m.roberts@npt.gov.uk

Andrew Lewis

Waste and Neighbourhood Services Manager

☎ 01639 686021

✉ a.lewis@npt.gov.uk