

TITLE: MEPAL OUTDOOR CENTRE: PROGRESS REPORT

Committee: Asset Development Committee

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Author: Victor Le Grand, Senior Leisure Services Officer

[T116]

1. ISSUE

- 1.1. To report on progress in the reinstatement and re-opening of Mepal Outdoor Centre.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Council gave approval in April 2018 for officers to support a preferred partner in developing a new activities attraction at Mepal Outdoor Centre. It is anticipated that the new centre will build on the existing facilities, but will have a stronger commercial proposition. This should strengthen the appeal of the site to the community at large, and improve its long-term viability. The leasehold terms will be framed to reflect this more commercial approach, while protecting the long-term interests of both sides.

4. ARGUMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. Officers met with the partner's senior management team on site in early June, and provided further site information so far as available. Further movement was held back by seasonal pressures on the preferred partner, but the company is now conducting more detailed investigations and surveys to confirm the scope of works required. The current focus is on general groundworks (primarily clearance and levelling as appropriate), the water depths and quality, the main reception & activity building, and the high ropes facility.
- 4.2. In parallel with this, officers are working with an external legal adviser to prepare appropriate heads of terms and leasehold documentation for discussion with the preferred partner when both sides are ready to proceed.
- 4.3. It is envisaged that these workstreams will converge to allow the first phase of reinstatement works to be carried out over the winter, with a view to the

site re-opening for business in early summer 2019. It is not yet possible to provide a detailed timetable but officers will report back as such information becomes available.

- 4.4. We continue to receive new enquiries on a regular basis; all such enquirers are informed that the Council is following through the outcome of the market process undertaken last year, and that no new proposals will therefore be entertained at this stage.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There are no new financial commitments or equality impacts arising from this report.