

# Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee

Special Committee

Date: 16th January 2011

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**Author:** Cabinet Member for Council Transformation, Transport and Strategic Planning and Director of Planning and Transport

**Parish / Wards Affected:** All

## Purpose

- To consider recommendations by partner local authorities for the dis-banding of the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee (CWPJC) and establishment of future governance arrangements.

## Recommendation

Special Committee, on behalf of the Council is requested to endorse proposals from partner local authorities:

- To dis-band the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee on 31st March 2012 by agreement of all Local Authority partners;
- For the Cotswold Water Park to remain an outside body to which Council nominates a Member as its representative;
- To form a liaison or co-ordination group for the Parish Councils (and potentially other community organisations) within and neighbouring the Cotswold Water Park ;
- To authorise Council officers to continue to attend meetings of the Cotswold Water Park Officer Liaison Group to ensure effective cross-boundary working and liaison on strategic issues;
- For Individual funding and delivery arrangements to be set up between each Local Authority and the Cotswold Water Park Trust.

In consequence of the latter point, the Special Committee is also asked to recommend that:

- the Cabinet is requested as part of the Budget setting process to consider whether the Council continues to earmark funding within the Revenue Budget from April 2012 relating to the Cotswold Water Park.

## 1. Reasons

- 1.1 Local authority signatories to the Cotswold Water Park (CWP) Partnership Agreement (1994) are proposing that the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee be dis-banded as from 31st March 2012 with the agreement of all the constituent local authorities.

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Jonathan Wilshaw on Direct Dial No. 466322 or Email [jwilshaw@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:jwilshaw@swindon.gov.uk).

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- 1.2 In the absence of the CWP Joint Committee new governance arrangement will be established to make more effective use of limited staff and financial resources, reduce bureaucracy and increase accountability, and provide opportunities for more direct local community involvement, including closer involvement of Swindon Borough Parishes neighbouring the Water Park.

## 2. Detail

- 2.1 The Cotswold Water Park (CWP) administrative boundary is contiguous with the Borough along the line of the River Thames, although the 'functional' boundary as described in the CWP Master Plan overlaps with that of the Borough, south of Lechlade, Hannington Wick and Castle Eaton.
- 2.2 The CWP is a major recreational destination for Swindon residents and visitors to the area. The CWP attracts well over 500,000 visits per year, with an estimated 30- 40% coming from Swindon. Alongside increased pressure on local communities, the potential of the area for recreation, tourism and biodiversity is set to increase as the Water Park continues to develop and surrounding populations, including Swindon, continue to grow.
- 2.3 Whilst the Council (SBC) is not a formal signatory to the Partnership Agreement, the Borough has been a voting member on, and has made an annual financial contribution to the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee (£10,000) to further the development and strategic delivery of the CWP Master Plan.
- 2.4 The Council's contribution, which is considerably less than that of the other local authority partners, has been used as a means to influence and play an active role in shaping the strategic direction and development of the Cotswold Water Park. The contribution was agreed in the first place as other partners believed that only authorities making a financial contribution should play a direct role in decision making over the future development of the CWP. As a result of the contribution, Swindon has been able to work closely with the CWP on a number of related strategies and projects, improving access for Swindon's communities to the landscape, nature and leisure opportunities that the Water Park offers. In view of this, it is considered that the £10,000 has represented good value for money for the Borough and its residents.
- 2.5 SBC Officers have been involved in on-going discussions on the future of the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee and have helped to shape the proposals for future governance arrangements. These will involve more direct relationships between the Cotswold Water Park Trust and individual

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local authorities. Officers are in support of these proposals as set out in this report.

- 2.6 Councillor Doreen Dart has represented SBC on the CWP Joint Committee for many years, and is supportive of the proposed recommendations around future governance. Councillor Dart hopes to attend the Special Committee to comment on the contents of this report.
- 2.7 With the disbanding of the Water Park Joint Committee, the Council is no longer required to make an annual financial contribution in order to secure an involvement in its decision making and strategic direction. This offers the opportunity for Members to review the sum within the Revenue Budget of £10,000 that has been included for this purpose. Options available are:
- a) Apply the sum towards future improvements in the Water Park or similar facilities within Swindon;
  - b) Re-direct all or part of the sum to other services;
  - c) Realise a saving of the full sum to contribute towards the overall financial position.
- 2.8 The Special Committee is asked to request the Cabinet to consider these options in recommending a final Budget to Council in February 2012.

## Alternative Options

- Members could choose to cease all involvement with the Cotswold Water Park Trust in the future. This would undermine the Council's ability to influence the strategic direction and development of CWP through the officer and parish forums identified in the report.

### Risk Management

#### *Financial and Procurement Implications*

- The financial implications are covered in the main body of the report.

#### *Legal / Human Rights Implications*

- Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has not been undertaken as this report does not make any recommendations or have implications that affect services

#### *Links to Corporate Plans and Policies*

- Core Strategy

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### **Consultees**

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

### **Background Papers and Appendices**

- None.