

Agenda Item No:	11	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24 March 2025	
Report Title:	Fenland Inspire! Whittlesey Manor Field Community Pathway	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To provide information on the proposed all-weather permeable surface community pathway making the Manor Field accessible to all.
- 1.2 This is the first project in Whittlesey to be brought forward for delivery as part of the Fenland Inspire! programme which seeks to enhance the leisure and cultural legacy to be left by Fenland District Council after Local Government Reorganisation.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Manor Field is a beautiful community open space in the heart of Whittlesey. It is bordered by the river along one side and features a cricket pitch, outdoor green bowls club, tennis / netball courts, a skate park, basketball hoop, large playing fields and a wildflower meadow. And, of course, this area features the Manor Leisure Centre. It is anticipated that a Football Foundation PlayZone will be built adjacent to the tennis courts in the next few months.
- 2.2 The Manor is an important place for fishing – with access to the river currently awkward due to ground conditions. There is also a boat mooring behind the Leisure Centre – access to this is also difficult and would be improved significantly by the addition of the pathway.
- 2.3 Unfortunately, the ground is very wet across the whole field for 6 months of the year. This means that walking around the open space becomes difficult for most people and impossible for disabled people and the younger and older members of the community. The local Rambler's Wellbeing Walk, organised by Active Fenland, would use the Manor as part of their community walk route – but due to the ground conditions it is not possible.
- 2.4 The field hosts a community Wellbeing Walk. The field is home to Whittlesey's Park Run, held every Saturday morning. This popular community event has been running for several years and attract local community members as well as people wanting to be active from across the country. A summary of the success of the event can be found below. In autumn, winter and early spring, running the route is difficult and often requires dedicated volunteers to wheelbarrow chippings into the soggy areas to make the events possible.

Manor Field parkrun, Whittlesey event statistics

Problem with results? please contact manorfieldwhittlesey@parkrun.com

Events: 268

Finishers: 3479

Finishes: 20723

Volunteers: 479

PBs: 2856

Average finish time: 00:32:24

- 2.5 To improve accessibility to all the Council aspires to construct a perimeter track around the outside of the field. This will ensure that this open space is truly accessible to the wider community whilst supporting people's physical and mental health in terms of walking, jogging, or just being in a beautiful natural space.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the contents of the report and approves a budget of up to £300,000 to deliver a robust pathway around the perimeter of the Manor Field suitable for all members of the community, and that Cabinet authorises officers to formally procure and then enter a contract with the successful tenderer to deliver the necessary construction work.

Wards Affected	All Whittlesey Wards	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/24FEB25/01	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Peter Murphy	Portfolio Holder Parks and Open Spaces
	Cllr Alex Miscandlon	Portfolio Holder for Leisure
	Cllr Chris Boden	Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder
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Background Papers	N/A	

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The current field at the Manor in Whittlesey is a key community asset for the local community. Unfortunately for many months of the year walking around it is impossible due to the ground conditions.



- 1.2 As the Council's Business Plan for 2025-26 details, the Council has committed to delivering several community focussed capital investment projects across Fenland within the next three years as part of the Fenland Inspire! initiative. The Fenland Inspire! projects focus on enhancing much-loved sport, leisure, and open space facilities, as well as preserving and celebrating the District's rich heritage and built environment.
- 1.3 One of the Fenland Inspire! projects are improving access to the Manor Field by way of the construction of a perimeter pathway.

2 LOCATION MAP

- 2.1 As can be seen below, the perimeter pathway will be in the region of a mile long, after considering other adjustments such as the pathway to the tennis courts that requires work.
- 2.2 Members will also be aware that work is underway to develop plans to refurbish the leisure centre. Any design for the pathway will be cognisant of the design work for the leisure centre.



3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is expected that development of a perimeter pathway for the Manor Field with result in the following community benefits:

- 3.1 **Increased visitor numbers leading to better physical and mental health:**
- 3.2 With increased access to the field, more people will visit, enjoying a walk or a jog, with friends or family. The pathway will be smooth, will drain well and will be robust and wide enough for two disabled scooters to pass one another. Improving access to all members of the community will further increase the number of people enjoying the Manor Field. This will improve community health and wellbeing.
- 3.3 Additionally, the improved conditions are also likely to increase the popularity of the local Parkrun.
- 3.4 The current access to the netball and tennis courts is poor. This pathway will be improved as part of the perimeter pathway works.
- 3.5 **Increased Social Interaction**
- 3.6 More people visiting the open space will lead to increased community interaction – leading to stronger communities, better understanding between people, less anti-social behaviour in the park.

- 3.7 Part of this project is expected to include additional robust benches and picnic tables around the pathway to help foster social interaction.
- 3.8 Reducing loneliness and increasing interactions that people have supports community mental health.

4 Costs and delivery timescales for the proposed pathway

- 4.1 Initially a hoggan path was discussed as these are cheaper to deliver and are commonplace in open spaces. However, ground conditions in the field are so poor that an engineering assessment has determined that this approach would provide a pathway that would quickly become unfit for use. A traditional tarmac path, bound by concrete edging is the answer in this location and will last many years.
- 4.2 The budget cost for this work is between £250,000 and £300,000.
- 4.3 Delivery timescales;
- Design work April – May
 - Contractor Procurement June
 - Pre-contract period July
 - Delivery August - September
 - Handover October

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the local ParkRun leader, feedback from the local netball and cricket clubs and the Council's local Elected Members.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Differing materials for the pathway have been considered by engineers and the consensus is that a robust approach is required due to the underlying ground conditions and a tarmac path, bounded by concrete edging would be the most suitable solution in this location.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Implications

N/A

7.2 Financial Implications

Cabinet and Council has recently approved the Council's Business Plan which includes this project specifically in the Fenland Inspire! Section, with budget allowed for the Fenland Inspire! Projects within the Council budget for 2025/26.

7.3 Equality Implications

- 7.4 This pathway will significantly enhance the accessibility of this significant green space to everyone within the community, particularly for those with disabilities.