

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**URGENT DECISION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE - INTERIM
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR SHERWOOD FOREST COUNTRY
PARK COMMERCIAL SERVICES FEBRUARY 2017 – APRIL 2018****Purpose of the Report**

1. To note that urgent approval was given by the Chief Executive on 23rd December 2016 for recruitment to a new fixed term post of Commercial Manager, Sherwood Forest Country Park, as an interim arrangement until the operation of the site transfers to the RSPB in April 2018.

Information and Advice

2. A new fixed term appointment is required to manage the commercial operation at Sherwood to enable catering and retail functions to continue and to fulfil existing customer commitments, which include 48 wedding bookings. The cancellation of the December Culture Committee necessitated approval under the urgency procedure in order to recruit a manager as soon as possible after 1st February when the existing management arrangements will cease. The reasons are set out below.
3. The RSPB has contracted with Nottinghamshire County Council to build and manage the new Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre at Sherwood Forest Country Park. Planning permission for the new building has been submitted. It is expected that the new centre will open for business in April 2018. At that point the current visitor centre will close, and all staff will TUPE transfer from the County Council's Country Parks service to the new operator.
4. Currently, catering and retail operations at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre are run 'in house' by the Council, overseen by the Country Parks Service Commercial Manager, based at nearby Rufford Abbey Country Park.
5. The Commercial Manager line manages the Country Parks Service Catering and Retail Managers, who work across both sites.
6. In November 2016, following a tendering exercise, Members approved the externalisation of commercial operations at Rufford Abbey. As of January 2017, commercial operations at Rufford Abbey Country Park will thus be run by a commercial leisure management company (Parkwood Leisure) on a 15 year contract. The posts of Country Parks Commercial Manager, Retail Manager and Catering Manager will TUPE

transfer to the new Rufford Abbey operator, on the basis that the greater proportion of their time is spent there.

7. A consequence of the swift implementation of new arrangements at Rufford Abbey is that for a period of approximately 15 months, Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre will lack a Commercial Manager to direct retail and catering operations, including wedding and hospitality catering.
8. The RSPB do not wish to take over commercial management of the Sherwood Forest site before the agreed handover date in April 2018.

Other Options Considered

9. Front line staff in post require the direction and support of a dedicated manager through the period of transition to new management arrangements at Sherwood Forest Country Park. To wait for the next Culture Committee meeting to seek approval for appointment to this post would have resulted in an unacceptable delay.
10. It has been established that early take-over of commercial operations by the future operator (RSPB) is not an option.
11. The use of agency staff to provide temporary management cover is not feasible, given the need for understanding of the site and existing customer base, and the reputational risk to the Authority should quality standards fall.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. Under the procedure for taking urgent decisions, contained in Part C of the County Council's Constitution, the Chief Executive may take a decision which is normally reserved to Committee where he believes that the decision is urgent, and where failure to take the decision quickly would, or would be likely to, harm the interests of the Council and the public. In this case the Council has a responsibility to maintain existing levels of customer service and quality until such time as the RSPB is in a position to assume responsibility for operations at Sherwood Forest Country Park.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

14. The requirement for temporary management cover is an unavoidable consequence of new management arrangements for Rufford Abbey and Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre. However, it is a temporary situation. The cost of around £40,000 p.a., including on-costs, for the indicative Band A post (subject to job evaluation) will be absorbed within the

Sherwood Forest Country Park 2016/17 and 2017/18 revenue budget. The post will be full time with an expectation of some weekend and evening work that will attract the normal enhancements.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) The Committee notes the urgent approval by the Chief Executive on 23rd December 2016 to approve the appointment of an interim Commercial Manager (indicative Band A) for Sherwood Forest Country Park to cover the period from February 2017 to April 2018 (or until such time that the RSPB assume responsibility for the operation of the new Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre - expected in April 2018).

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Constitutional Comments

15. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (TMR 14/11/16)

16. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 14 of the report.

HR Comments (JA 29/11/2016)

17. The post has been subject to job evaluation and will be recruited to in line with the council's vacancy control protocol.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Job Description – Commercial Manager (Fixed Term) Sherwood Forest Country Park.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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