



HARPENDEN TOWN COUNCIL

CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY

29 July 2020

Town Council investment in Rothamsted Park put on hold due to SADC demands

Harpenden Town Council (HTC) has for some time been in discussions with St Albans City & District Council (SADC) about the transfer of ownership of Rothamsted Park. Unfortunately, SADC have put in place financial demands to any transfer that would place an unfair burden on Harpenden Residents.

This important local asset needs investment in several areas and in May 2020 HTC committed in principle funding of over £750k to deliver a new vision for the Park. This included investment in:

- New Children's Play Area
- Redeveloped pavilion for Community use
- Higher quality pitches for youth and adult sport
- New 3G pitch on the current Football Club site (subject to external funding)

In March 2020, SADC put out a public statement that supported the change in ownership and committed that there will be ***'no purchase price and any savings made from SADC's budget will be passed on to Harpenden Residents through their share of the Council Tax'***.

It has been on this basis that HTC have been carrying out discussions over the transfer, however the conditions that SADC have now presented to us conflict with the statements that have been previously made.

There are several financial commitments that SADC currently have that they would need to deliver on if they were to retain ownership of Rothamsted Park. Under the transfer of ownership these would all in effect be financial savings to SADC budgets. However, the conditions of the transfer set out by SADC state that HTC must pay for these. These include:

- £25k - annual maintenance and repairs budget
- £100k - to demolish Pavilions in major disrepair
- £10k - health & safety tree works
- £125k - legal commitment to improve football facilities

It now appears that significant savings by SADC would not be passed back to Harpenden Residents. Furthermore, it could be feasible that the savings made by SADC are used to deliver other priorities in the wider District.



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Cllr Nicola Linacre, Harpenden Town Mayor, said, *“The financial implications of the Terms set out by SADC represent a fundamental shift from what had been discussed and anticipated. The Town Council has decided that it cannot be in the best interests of Harpenden residents to accept SADC’s proposal. We have therefore rejected the terms and withdrawn from discussions over the transfer of Rothamsted Park until SADC have dealt with their immediate health & safety and financial commitments.*

The Town Council has always been aware that by taking on assets from SADC that it would have increased liabilities and may need additional financial commitments in future years. However, we had not anticipated having to cover SADC’s immediate financial and health & safety commitments that they would have if they retained ownership.

We have not given up hope of owning Rothamsted Park so that we can make improvements for the local community, but to take ownership we do need a change of position from SADC on the financial elements of the transfer.”

If you would like more information on the Town Council’s vision for Rothamsted Park, please contact Carl Cheevers, Town Clerk at carl.cheevers@harpenden.gov.uk