

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr David Dixon, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2015	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2736
TITLE:	Sydney Gardens Refurbishment – Enabling Works	
WARD:	Bathwick and nearby Wards in Bath	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> None		

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To approve funding of works in Sydney Gardens which will help support a bid for external funding to renovate the Gardens.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member approves capital expenditure of up to £250k in order to carry out renovation works in Sydney Gardens.
- 2.2 Delegated Authority to spend the above sum, on works identified by a site survey and public consultation, be granted to the Divisional Director of Environmental Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

### 3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 A provisionally approved sum of £500k is included in the 2014/15 capital budget funded by Corporately Supported Borrowing. The purpose of this item, as detailed in the February 2013 Council budget report, is that it be used as necessary in support of a bid to secure Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding which would support the renovation of the Gardens.
- 3.2 Negotiations currently taking place with Network Rail will establish whether (and to what degree) any works necessary might be funded by a contribution associated with the electrification project. Any such contribution would be used to offset the costs of the proposed works.

- 3.3 The budget for the works now planned will not exceed £250k. This expenditure, in terms of the HLF bid, represents Round 1 (pre-feasibility) funding. Spending this money now in order to safeguard the condition of the Gardens will improve the user experience and value of the Gardens and avert greater costs at a later date - whilst also potentially reducing future Council costs associated with a HLF funding application.
- 3.4 This reduces the amount of funding available to support any future HLF funding by up to £250K and therefore should there be a need at a future date to consider allocating any further resources in support of a funding application, this would require a decision of the Full Council as part of the relevant future budget process.

#### **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 Surveys undertaken to support a bid for HLF funding have identified that the condition of the Gardens, including some of the listed historic structures and public amenities, is in need of attention. The Council, as landowner, is obliged to maintain listed structures in good order and safe condition.
- 4.2 Expenditure will focus on those areas identified as of highest priority in order to address poor condition and meet the requirements of site visitors.
- 4.3 The proposed work will therefore have beneficial effects in the areas of safety and prioritisation of expenditure will focus on meeting obligations and making improvements in the areas of equalities and crime & disorder, sustainability, natural environment, children, public health & inequalities.

#### **5 THE REPORT**

- 5.1 Two bids have been made to date for HLF funding to support the renovation of Sydney Gardens. The first was helpful in establishing what else needed to be done to create a successful bid and the second was warmly received by HLF officers but was withdrawn when it became apparent that it did not enjoy the support of some local residents including the Friends of Sydney Gardens.
- 5.2 It is not intended to submit a further bid during this financial year as there is a need to engage all interested parties in the process of identifying how best to develop a proposal which enjoys the most widespread community support possible. That process will take over a year to bring to fruition.
- 5.3 In the meantime the Gardens continue to decline with some of the important historic structures being in need of attention in order to avert greater costs at a later date. Much of the “public park” infrastructure (such as tennis courts and play areas) is overdue for repair and resurfacing and large areas of the Gardens are overgrown which is not helpful in managing anti-social and inappropriate behaviour.
- 5.4 The recent successful renovation of Queen Square demonstrates that it is possible to breathe new life into tired public spaces by involving the local community in supporting a project and completing the work over a short period of time. It is intended to adopt a similar approach in deciding what works should be prioritised as a first stage towards a more comprehensive renovation.

**6 RATIONALE**

- 6.1 Although there can be no guarantee that the HLF would consider this expenditure to count as “match funding” by the Council, addressing the need to safeguard the condition of the assets within the Gardens is likely to be considered as a positive contribution whereas to stand by and allow further decline is unlikely to be seen favourably by the HLF when considering whether to support a project in the future.
- 6.2 Works will soon be carried out within the Gardens to mitigate the impact of electrification of the railway and discussions are currently taking place to establish whether some mitigation funding might be available from Network Rail to support this project. If that proves successful then the net cost of the project to the Council would be reduced accordingly. There is a need to carry out works in order to tackle the poor condition of the asset and to assist in levering in funding when a bid is submitted.

**7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 To not undertake works. This would lead to further deterioration of assets and send negative signals to the HLF and would be likely to create problems in meeting our obligations as set out above. It would also mean that the Gardens would not be in a position to benefit from any mitigation funding which may be available from Network Rail.

**8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Those consulted in preparing this report include The Council Leader, The Council Deputy Leader, Ward Members for Bathwick, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Strategic Director of Place.
- 8.2 The prioritisation of expenditure will be determined following further site surveys and evaluations in addition to consultation with the public, site users, local Residents Associations, the Friends of Sydney Gardens and Ward Members of Bathwick and surrounding wards and the Holburne Museum.

**9 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

<b>Contact person</b>	<i>Carol Maclellan (01225 394106)</i>
<b>Background papers</b>	<i>Sydney Gardens – HLF bid submissions</i>
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	