

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Martin Veal, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Resources	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after : 7 December 2015	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E2810
TITLE:	Preparation of Parks for People funding application for Sydney Gardens	
WARD:	Abbey, Bathwick and Walcot Wards in Bath	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
None		

1.0. THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To approve funding for the preparation of a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Parks for People application to renovate the gardens which are of national importance - being one of the few remaining 18th century pleasure gardens in the UK, and to allocate match funding should such a bid be successful. Following capital review, budget of £495k was reverted to provisional on the capital programme. £372k is now required to prepare and deliver a new HLF bid this year and into 16/17. Of this, £250K is required as 10% match funding for the £2.5 million lottery funding that we are seeking.

2.0. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Cabinet Members approve further capital expenditure of up to £90k on work needed to prepare and submit a Stage 1 Parks for People bid.
- 2.2 That £250K of the remaining capital funding previously allocated in the Council's capital programme for Sydney Gardens be approved to be committed as a contribution towards the £2.5million anticipated to be sought from HLF.

3.0. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 A provisional budget of £500k had initially been established in the capital programme, funded by Corporately Supported Borrowing, with the purpose of

supporting a bid to secure Heritage Lottery Fund monies for the renovation of the gardens.

- 3.2 We have committed £49K spend in total to date. We are seeking approval to commit a further £303.5K to the next phase of developing and submitting the HLF bid. Our total spend on this project would therefore be 372k to lever in £2.5million.
- 3.3 A review of the capital programme was undertaken by Members during the first half of the 2015/16 financial year and it was recommended that a further Cabinet or Single Member Decision would be required on the programme item before any more works or expenditure were carried out.
- 3.4 In 2015, B&NES undertook a round of public consultation to identify public priorities for improving Sydney Gardens, combined with earlier surveys undertaken to support a bid for HLF funding. It has become clear that there is a long list of investment priorities and aspirations for which the initial sum allocated for Early Works (£250,000) is insufficient.
- 3.5 A number of practical improvements to the space have been undertaken using some of the funds allocated from the provisionally approved sum. These have been very well received by parks users and have helped to tackle some of the anti-social behaviour which has long been a problem in the gardens, and there are now strong expectations to keep the momentum going.
- 3.6 Without any further capital investment in Sydney Gardens, the condition of the park will continue to deteriorate, structures will become unsafe, anti-social behaviour will once again become a problem and the long term costs associated with 'patching up' neglected structures and public amenities will only grow further. 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.
- 3.7 Much of the "public park" infrastructure (such as tennis courts and play areas) is overdue for repair and resurfacing and a management plan is required for these in future.
- 3.8 The Heritage lottery fund will require a 10% contribution towards any bid. A successful funding application will include repair and maintenance for a 10 year period so that the Council's revenue liability will not increase during this period as a result of the bid.
- 3.9 It is anticipated that the Council will bid for £2.5M. If the application for a Parks for People bid is unsuccessful, it is proposed that the development plan and other work produced through the project be used as a basis for seeking funding from other sources or resourced using a different funding model – so that there is no revenue reversion for this piece of work.

4.0 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 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.

5.0. 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 by the Council when it became apparent that it did not enjoy the support of some local residents including the Friends of Sydney Gardens.
- 5.2 As a result of this, the Council embarked upon a programme of consultation and a strong relationship with local stakeholders has now been built. The Sydney Gardens Steering Group (which includes the Friends of Sydney Gardens) is now supportive of making a renewed Heritage Lottery Fund application.
- 5.3 Discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund have revealed that the Heritage Lottery Fund would, in principle, welcome a renewed Parks for People application from B&NES provided that concerns about opposition to the scheme from local residents are addressed. Strong support from local stakeholders for a renewed application suggests that this major obstacle has now been addressed.
- 5.4 Sydney Gardens requires a substantial capital investment now to address years of under-investment, to safeguard the long term condition of the Gardens, and to help generate new sources of income for the authority.
- 5.5 The authority has a good opportunity to use the results of the public consultation, the comprehensive background information about Sydney Gardens and the relevant information from earlier Parks for People bids to develop a new masterplan and management plan for the site. This would be done in partnership with the Sydney Gardens Steering Group to ensure strong community engagement and address the key concern levelled at earlier bids.
- 5.6 Sydney Gardens is of national importance as one of only a handful of remaining 18th century pleasure gardens in the UK. The park itself is Grade II listed and it houses a number of Grade II listed structures, many of which in their current condition are at risk of serious decline.
- 5.7 The Gardens are a popular destination for local users and tourists alike. Their heritage status hints at opportunities to develop an important visitor attraction in the city and their popularity with local residents presents a range of options for income generation – both of which could help mitigate the costs associated with maintaining the space.
- 5.8 In the event of an unsuccessful application for Parks for People funding, the investment in developing a new outline masterplan and management

plans would nevertheless map out a costed, long term, plan for maintaining and developing the site in coming years.

6.0. RATIONALE

The investment to prevent decline in the Gardens is significant. A heritage lottery application would seem to be the most cost effective way to preserve the heritage aspects whilst bringing the park back to required standards of current and future park users.

7.0. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 To not undertake any improvement works. This would lead to further deterioration of assets and would potentially put us in breach of our obligations under the listed status.

8.0. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Those consulted in preparing this report include The Council Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, ward members for Abbey, Bathwick and Walcot wards, The Friends of Sydney Gardens, The Holburne Museum, Bathwick Estates Residents Association, Pultney Estates Residents, Bathwick Hill Residents Association Association, The Heritage lottery fund.
- 8.2 The Council's Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Strategic Director for Place have had the opportunity to input to this report.

9.0. 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.

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Background papers	<i>Sydney Gardens – HLF bid submissions</i>
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