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**Subject:** PARKS FOR PEOPLE: KEARSNEY ABBEY HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND ENABLING WORK AND REPAIRS TO RUSSELL GARDENS BRIDGE

**Decision to be taken by:** Mr Mike Davis, Director of Finance, Housing and Community

**Report of:** Mr Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Michael Conolly, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance

**Decision Type:** Executive Non-Key Decision

**Call-in to be Suspended:** No (*Call-in does not apply to Non-Key Officer Decisions*)

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Delegated Authority:** Cabinet Decision CAB 155(a)(iii)(E) of 1 March 2017

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**Purpose of the report:** To undertake enabling work at Kearsney Abbey in connection with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid and essential repairs to Russell Gardens bridge.

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**Recommendation:** To approve the business case (capital appraisal) for Kearsney Abbey HLF enabling work and essential repairs to Russell Gardens bridge, and to agree to the enabling work and repairs being funded from the Special Projects Reserve allocation in the current Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

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## 1. Summary

1.1 Following the Council's acceptance of a £3.1m HLF grant for the Kearsney Parks project, this report considers the business case for some enabling work necessary to facilitate the construction of an extension and refurbishment of the historic Kearsney Abbey Tearoom.

1.2 This report also considers the business case for essential repairs to an access bridge in Russell Gardens which is in a dilapidated and structurally unsafe condition.

## 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Cabinet were last formally updated in December 2015 regarding the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund awarded to Dover District Council for a Parks for People project to restore, improve and develop new audiences for Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens.

2.2 The HLF grant of £3.1m was formally accepted by the Director of Finance, Housing and Community using delegated authority under the Council's constitution and the project has progressed to the detailed design and procurement stage with work commencing on site in the autumn of 2017.....

- 2.3 The project will focus on restoring the landscapes in Russell Gardens and Kearsney Abbey but will also include refurbishing and extending the grade-II listed Kearsney Abbey tearooms. During the works the existing tea room will need to close to enable the works to take place.
- 2.4 The tearooms are currently leased to a catering company and their lease is due to end in May 2018. The lessee has agreed to voluntarily surrender their lease in autumn 2017 to enable the restoration work to proceed as planned. They have also agreed to supply a temporary tea hut building to operate a reduced food and drink service during the works and DDC have agreed to connect the building to services (power, water, etc). DDC will also provide a small site office so that project and maintenance staff can operate effectively during the works. The negotiations with the lessee were concluded after our round 2 bid was submitted to HLF and so this work cannot be covered by the HLF grant. £20,000 has been set aside in the MTFP to provide temporary facilities for the tearoom and staff.
- 2.5 The Russell Gardens bridge sits just outside of the boundary for the works included within the HLF grant work. It provides the gardens with pedestrian and more importantly ground maintenance vehicle access into the park. The bridge is in a dilapidated and dangerous condition and requires urgent repairs to ensure its continued use for the park's future upkeep and maintenance. Uncertainty around the ownership of the bridge has prevented earlier work to carry out repairs. Following a land swap with Kearsney Court Management Company, DDC now own the bridge and the repairs can proceed.
- 2.6 It is planned to repair the bridge later in the summer and this is anticipated to cost £13,000.
- 2.7 At their meeting of 1 March 2017, Cabinet decided (under Decision Number CAB 155(a)(iii)(E):

'To Continue the practice of delegating authority to the Director of Finance, Housing and Community, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance, to authorise projects up to £50,000 that have been included in the Capital and Special Revenue Projects programmes; authorise the allocation of funds to projects from the Capital and Special Revenue Contingencies; authorise virements between regeneration projects and apply Growth Point reserves to regeneration projects.'

### 3. **Identification of Options**

3.1 The options are to:

- Proceed with plans to provide temporary facilities and repair the bridge.
- Only repair the bridge.
- Only provide temporary facilities.
- Do nothing.

### 4. **Evaluation of Options**

4.1 Proceeding with plans for temporary facilities will ensure that the lessee can continue to provide a refreshment service for park users during the HLF project and they will

continue to voluntarily surrender their lease so that the refurbishment work can proceed. Disruption to the lessee, their staff and park users, along with the associated negative publicity, will be minimised. Maintenance and project staff will be able to continue with their work and be accessible to the public to deal with any queries.

- 4.2 Repairing the bridge will mean that risks to park users and staff will be addressed, maintenance and construction vehicles will be able to access the park, and as a result restoration and maintenance work can continue as planned.
- 4.3 The cost of this work has been budgeted for in the MTFP.
- 4.4 If we only repair the bridge, access to Russell Gardens will be secured but there will be significant negative consequences for park users, the lessee and their staff. There will be no refreshments available during the works and it will be difficult for maintenance and project staff to carry out their duties.
- 4.5 If we only provide temporary facilities, construction and maintenance vehicles will not be able to access Russell Gardens, restoration work will not be able to proceed and we will no longer be able to maintain the park to an acceptable standard. There will also be a significant health and safety risk to the park's users.
- 4.6 If we do nothing, all of the negative consequences outlined in 4.4 and 4.5 will apply.

## 5. **Resource Implications**

- 5.1 £20,000 has been set aside in the MTFP to provide temporary facilities for the tearoom and staff and £13,000 to repair the Russell Gardens Bridge.
- 5.2 Delivering this work has been included in the work plans of Property Service staff.

## 6. **Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment to add. (KW)
- 6.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: The report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications, however in discharging their responsibilities members are required to comply with the public sector duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>
- 6.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

The Kearsney Parks Project Manager has been consulted. They support these works and confirm they are necessary for the Kearsney Parks project to proceed and to maintain stakeholder and public support for the project.

## 7. **Appendices**

None.

8. **Background Papers**

None.

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