
Subject: GENERAL REPAIRS TO PARKS, GARDENS AND CHURCHYARDS

Meeting and Date: Cabinet – 4 June 2018

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

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Environmental Health

Decision Type: Non-Key

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: (a) To seek approval for the allocation of £60,000 from the Special Project Reserve provision included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to:

1. Contribute towards the cost of preparing updated open space strategies for the district.
2. Carry out urgent repairs to structural features within Parks, Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards; and

(b) To authorise the Head of Parks and Open Spaces, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Environmental Health, to procure the structural works.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

1. Approves the allocation of £24,392 of the £60,000 from the Special Project Reserve provision included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to contribute towards the cost of preparing updated open space strategies for the District.
 2. Approves the allocation of £35,608 of the £60,000 from the Special Project Reserve provision included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to carry out urgent repairs to structural features within Parks, Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards.
 3. Authorises the Head of Parks and Open Spaces, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Environmental Health, to procure necessary repair works.
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1. Summary

The Council has successfully delivered a number of priority projects identified within its current open space strategies. For example, £3.3 m has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens. In addition, since these strategies were adopted the grounds maintenance service has been transferred in-house, meaning that the Council is in a strong position to deliver smaller scale projects such as repairs to uneven footpath surfaces at the Council's strategic parks.

2. It is now necessary to review the open space strategies, to ensure that the identified priorities are up-to-date and reflect the Council's current capabilities. The purpose of this report is to allocate £60,000 identified within the Medium Term Financial Plan towards the cost of updating the strategies, and addressing the most urgent repairs to structural features within the Council's parks, cemeteries and churchyards.

3. **Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 The Council has adopted a suite of open space strategies: the Parks and Amenity Open Spaces Strategy in October 2013, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy in February 2015 and Review of Play Area Provision 2012-2026. These strategies are equally important to both the Property Services and Planning Departments. For example, maintaining up-to-date strategies helps the Council to plan expenditure at its open spaces and also supports funding applications for special projects. In addition, the strategies provide evidence for policies and standards within the Local Plan, which in turn underpin negotiations with developers regarding open space contributions.
- 3.2 Since the current strategies were adopted the Council has successfully delivered a number of priority projects. For example, £3.3 m has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens. Most of the investment projects identified within the play area strategy have been delivered and the Council has secured a number of development contributions that will be used to achieve objectives set out in the pitch strategy. In addition, the grounds maintenance service has recently been transferred in-house, meaning that the Council is in a strong position to deliver smaller scale projects such as repairs to uneven footpath surfaces at its strategic parks.
- 3.3 It is now necessary to review the open space strategies. This will ensure the identified priorities are up-to-date, reflect the Council's current capabilities and that the strategies continue to provide a sound evidence base for the planning process. The Parks and Open Spaces and Regeneration Delivery teams worked together to develop a project brief that fully encompasses the priorities of the two departments. The project was tendered by the Head of Regeneration and Development as part of the evidence base review for the Local Plan Review (as authorised by Cab 157, 9th March 2017).
- 3.4 Five companies responded to the invitation to quote and, following interviews, the proposal from Knight, Kavanagh & Page was identified as best meeting the Council's objectives. The cost of KK&P's proposal is £48,785. This will be met from the allocation included in the current Medium Term Financial Plan for general repairs in parks and gardens and the remainder from the Local Plan Review budget.
- 3.5 The remaining portion of the allocation of £60,000 (£35,608) is for general repairs in parks and will be used to address high priority repairs. The Council's Health and Safety Officer has worked with the Parks and Open Spaces team to develop a priority list of the most urgent works. This includes issues such as uneven surfaces on footpaths. It is proposed that the Head of Parks and Open Spaces be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to procure any necessary repair works within this budget so that necessary works can be undertaken quickly.
- 3.6 The requested allocation will be sufficient to address current priority issues, unless unforeseen circumstances arise. In the longer term strategy development will support the Parks and Open Spaces Team in developing a comprehensive programme of repairs to maintain safe and welcoming public services, which may

include seeking external funding for key projects. It is anticipated that draft open space strategies will be available by the end of 2018 and, subject to Elected Member approval, they will be put out to public consultation early in 2019. These emerging strategies will inform proposals for the Parks and Open Spaces team 2019/20 budget.

4. Identification of Options

- 4.1 Option 1: To authorise allocation of £60,000 from Special Project Reserve provision included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to contribute £24,392.50 towards updated open space strategies for the district and £35,608 for necessary repairs within parks, cemeteries and churchyards and to authorise the Head of Parks & Open Spaces, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to procure the necessary repair works
- 4.2 Option 2: Not to authorise allocation of £60,000 from Special Project Reserve provision included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to contribute £24,392.50 towards updated open space strategies for the district and £35,608 for necessary repairs within parks, cemeteries and churchyards and not to authorise the Head of Parks & Open Spaces, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to procure the necessary repair works.

5. Evaluation of Options

- 5.1 Option 1: This is the preferred option as it will promote cross departmental working on strategy development, thus allowing the Authority to plan its long term management of open spaces in a holistic manner. In addition, it will secure the necessary repairs, which have been identified as necessary. The delegation of the procurement exercise to the Head of Parks and Open Spaces will ensure the works are carried out in a timely way.
- 5.2 Option 2: This is not recommended because of the pressure that would be placed on the Local Plan Review budget. Furthermore, the repair works have been identified as necessary and need to be undertaken quickly to ensure safety within its parks, cemeteries and churchyards. There may be delays should a further report to Cabinet be necessary.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 It is proposed to finance the works from the £60k Special Project Reserve provision included in the current Medium Term Financial Plan for general repairs to parks and gardens.

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment to add. (KW)
- 7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Head of Legal Services has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make.
- 7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: 'This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>'
- 7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

8. **Background Papers**

Local Plan Review - Cabinet 1 March 2017

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