

EASTCOTE HOUSE BUILDINGS AND GARDENS SCHEME (Part 1)

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jonathan Bianco
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance, Property and Business Services
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Papers with report	Appendix - Master Plan, Eastcote House Gardens

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

This report is public. However, the detailed financial breakdown of the project referenced within this report is shown in private part of this agenda to ensure taxpayers and the Council receive Value for Money in any forthcoming procurement exercises.

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	<p>The Heritage Lottery Fund have accepted the Council's Stage 2 bid for the project at Eastcote House Gardens and awarded the sum of £1,280,600 towards Stage 3 of the project: the delivery phase. This report seeks approval to accept this award on the basis of the proposed match funding package; to retain the previous consultants; to go out to tender for the contractors for the capital works and to appoint a Project Manager to oversee the site works.</p>
Contribution to our plans and strategies	<p>Contributes to the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Council Plan Corporate objectives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• maintaining local heritage;• ensuring heritage and natural environment are protected and enhanced• expanding cultural and sports activities• extending opportunities for older people to participate in leisure, recreational and cultural activities• working in partnership to maximise the effective use of resources• reducing anti-social behaviour.
Financial Cost	<p>Under the Stage 3 delivery proposals for the development of Eastcote House Gardens the Council will incur expenditure of £1,500,106, of which £1,303,100 will be met from grants and external contributions, including the Heritage Lottery Fund Stage 3 grant now awarded, and £197,006 will be met from Council resources. Of this, £132,006 has already been identified in existing programmes, leaving £65,000 as an additional unfunded commitment until such time as income generating opportunities are operational on the developed site.</p>

Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents' and Environmental Services
Ward(s) affected	Eastcote and East Ruislip

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

- 1) Accepts the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) award of £1,280,600, on the basis of the proposed match funding package, and authorises the delivery stage of the project for the refurbishment of the listed buildings, provision of additional facilities and the upgrading and interpreting of the park at Eastcote House Gardens, for community and educational use;**
- 2) Approves the addition of £995,050 to the Council's capital programme for 2013/14 and 2014/15 for the new capital expenditure that will be incurred under the proposed funding package, financed from HLF and other grants and Section 106 contributions;**
- 3) Authorises the Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director of Residents Services to make any necessary decisions to retain the consultants for the delivery phase, specifically Land Use Consultants up to a cumulative value of £135,192 and AOC Archaeology up to a cumulative value of £67,425;**
- 4) Notes that there will be a number of forthcoming procurement decisions, including the works contractor, and agrees that the Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director of Residents Services appoint a suitable Project Manager to oversee the site works and;**
- 5) Delegates all necessary procurement decisions for this project that are ordinarily reserved to the Cabinet to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services, to ensure swift project delivery.**

Reasons for recommendation

The Council has been successful in its Stage 2 Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the project at Eastcote House Gardens. The award of £1,280,600 represents 78% of the total eligible project cost of £1,650,106 for works of repair and improvement and a programme of community and educational activities at Eastcote House Gardens. The proposals have been informed by specialist surveys and designed by consultants with considerable input by the Steering Group, comprising officers, ward councillors and members of the Friends Group. They have also been shaped by the results of a large public consultation.

With the grant from the HLF and the input from the Friends Group in both volunteer hours and fund raising, new capital costs to the Council for the development phase would be relatively low, with revenue costs covered by the income identified in the Business Plan.

It is desirable to retain the Design Team of consultants and specialists for the delivery phase and, once the proposals have been fully detailed, the relevant contractors will need to be appointed to carry out the capital works. Project management will continue to be undertaken by existing council officers until a Project Manager is appointed to oversee the works on site.

The project would enable the buildings and gardens to be turned into a very valuable community and educational resource for residents from the local area and from all parts of the Borough.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide not to proceed with the project, in which case the work and expenditure invested in the Conservation Management Plan and the Stage 1 and Stage 2 HLF Bids, by the Council and local residents over the last four years, would have been to no avail and local expectations would be dashed.

Policy Overview Committee comments

None at this stage.

3. INFORMATION

Background

1. Eastcote House Gardens was once the grounds of Eastcote House which was demolished in the 1960's. It now comprises the timber-framed 16th century Stables, the 18th century Dovecote, the 18th/19th century Walled Garden, an area of public parkland and a part of the River Pinn and Long Meadow. The three buildings and structures are all listed Grade II, whilst the park is included on the draft Parks and Gardens Local List. Within Hillingdon's adopted Local Plan, the site is designated as a Green Link and has been included within the Eastcote Village Conservation Area.

2. The site has been in the Council's ownership for over seventy years. Although the Council carried out emergency works in 2012, general repairs, the complete modernisation of services and a viable future are now urgently needed for these buildings, which have been included on the Heritage at Risk Register, published by English Heritage. The Friends of Eastcote House Gardens, established in 2008, have been very successful in replanting and maintaining the gardens, holding community events and encouraging educational trips from local schools and uniformed groups, despite there being, until very recently, no shelter, toilets, refreshment facilities or a secure store for tools and equipment on the site. It was concluded that the only way to render the buildings fully usable and fulfil the enormous potential of the Gardens, was to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

3. In September 2009, Cabinet authorised officers to proceed with the drawing up of a Conservation Management Plan, which was the necessary precursor to an application for Heritage Lottery Funding. The work, led by consultants, was guided by a Steering Group

comprised of Ward Councillors, residents holding key positions in local organisations, Council officers and an officer from English Heritage.

4. In September 2010, Cabinet welcomed the published Management Plan, authorised officers to proceed to Stage 1 of a Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund under their Parks for People Programme and asked officers to investigate the relocation of the Eastcote Billiards Club and detailed costings for Urgent Works to the listed buildings.

5. In August 2011, the Stage 1 Bid was submitted by officers, with the news in December 2011 that it had been successful. Cabinet on February 2012 authorised officers to proceed with a Stage 2 Bid and to go out to tender for the relevant consultants.

6. The Stage 2 Bid was put together by a design team which included consultants and officers from the Council's Conservation, Green Spaces and Community Engagement Teams, who guided the consultants and contributed to and collated the Bid. However, all detailed decisions were taken in partnership with the Steering Group, who played a very active role in drawing up the proposals and in helping to run the public consultation in September 2012 and January 2013.

7. In November 2012, the results of the public consultation and the amendments put forward in response to them, were reported to Cabinet, who authorised officers to proceed with the Stage 2 Bid on that basis.

8. In February 2013, the Stage 2 Bid was submitted and in June 2013 the HLF's National Board announced that Eastcote House Gardens had been awarded funding for the Delivery Stage.

Terms and Conditions of the Grant

9. The award comprises a grant of up to £1,280,600, which is 78% of the total eligible project cost of £1,650,106 towards improvement works and a programme of community activities and archaeological work at Eastcote House Gardens.

10. The award offer letter, with the terms and conditions set out at the beginning of the 'Managing your Grant' document, are attached (Appendix 1). Some of the salient points are set out below:

- The project delivery must accord with the proposals (known as the *approved purposes*), set out in the Stage 2 Application;
- An HLF Monitor will be appointed to monitor the project management of the delivery phase against the approved purposes and standard terms and conditions, carrying out review meetings, receiving the quarterly progress reports, invoices and final evaluation report and agreeing procurement;
- If there is an underspend on the delivery phase, the HLF will reduce the final grant payable *pro rata*;
- The delivery phase can only be started after Permission to Start is given but this must be before 26th June 2014. It must be completed by 3rd August 2015;
- The terms and conditions of the grant will last for 25 years from 26th June 2013;
- The property must be insured for its full reinstatement value, including inflation and fees
- The project must be publicised in accordance with the HLF media guidelines.

Approved Purposes

11. The Stage 2 Application, which forms the 'Approved Purposes', includes:

- details of the Capital works to the buildings and gardens, set out in the Master Plan,
- the projected running costs set out in the Management and Maintenance Plan,
- a detailed Activity Plan for Community Engagement and
- a Business Plan to demonstrate how the Gardens can become self-financing once the HLF support ends after the first five years.

12. The Master Plan, from the Stage D document, submitted as part of the Bid, is set out in Appendix 2. The proposals include:

- The repair of the Stables building to form a community space, with new kitchenette and disabled toilet, storage for tables and chairs and double doors to rear terrace. The upper elevations will also need protection in the form of weather boarding as the timber frame is deteriorating badly.
 - A new building, linked by covered way to the Stables, to accommodate a small café with indoor and outdoor covered sitting areas, toilet facilities, with Site Manager's office and Gardeners' toilet and storage at first floor.
 - The repair and improvement of the Dovecote, with re-instatement of the louvers in the cupola, the building of a set of nesting boxes, the erection of exhibition boards for interpretation purposes and the installation of electricity.
 - The straightening and raising of the south and east walls of the Walled Garden, with a gardeners' compound to the rear, to include facilities for tools storage, a secure potting area and rest area/training venue for volunteers.
 - The relocation and setting out of a proper car park in the treed area close to Eastcote High Road, to provide improved facilities and visitor safety and to enable the enhancement of the setting of the Stables.
 - A community archaeological excavation to take place over four seasons, on the site of the old house, and on other sites within the grounds highlighted in the archaeological surveys. This is to inform the interpretation of the site and involve the whole community in archaeology.
 - Improvements to aid the flow and biodiversity of the River Pinn, also a boardwalk, beach for 'pond dipping', ecology walk with interpretation and an outdoor classroom.
 - Improvements to paths, enhanced accessibility and the creation of raised beds with a sensory garden for the benefit of wheelchair users and vision impaired visitors.
 - Increased security to include lighting, CCTV, alarms and enhanced boundary planting.
 - A Site Manager (salary for the first five years included in the project) to work in partnership with the Friends Group. This Council officer will take overall responsibility for organising school visits, take bookings for the Stables building, organise educational events and exhibitions; act as caretaker for the buildings, organising repairs and
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maintenance, cleaning and provide a presence on the site for enhanced security. There will also be a duty to bring in visitors from less advantaged parts of the Borough, increase the number and diversity of the volunteer groups, and ensure their training.

- Activity plan which will include: volunteer training, taking part in the Council's horticultural apprenticeship scheme, leading guided walks, producing leaflets, leading educational visits and talks and putting on a full events programme for visitors. This to be carried out by the Friends Group with the support and backing of the Site Manager.

13. The Business Plan demonstrates how the Stables building and the new café facility can make the site self-sufficient, provided that the proposed numbers of activities take place. It will be very important for the Site Manager to develop a good working partnership with the Friends Group and also for the Council to agree to ring fence the money earned on the site, for its ongoing maintenance and management. This is important for the Friends Group, who will need the certainty of this income stream and an incentive to market the site for the benefit of local groups, while the HLF expect the ring-fencing of income on projects that they are funding.

14. To ensure the full potential of the site is reached, and the HLF objectives continue to be met in the years after it is opened, it is planned that the Site Manager will report regularly to the Steering Group, who will assume an important monitoring role.

Consultants

15. The Lead Consultants employed during the development stage of the Bid were Land Use Consultants (Landscape Architects). Their team included Rees Bolter (Architects); Huntley Cartwright (Quantity Surveyors); the Morton Partnership (Conservation Engineers); and Paul Bastick Associates (M & E Engineers). Other consultants employed were AOC Archaeology (Archaeological Surveys and Community Excavations), Hunters (Construction Design Management Co-ordinator), McCurdy & Co (Timber Framing specialists) and Ecological Consultancy Services (Bat specialists).

16. Land Use Consultants and AOC Archaeology won tenders which took into account both the development and delivery phases of the project, with a break clause in case the project was not successful at Stage 2. McCurdy and Co and Ecological Consultancy Services won the lowest quotes for their specialisms, for work at both stages. Hunters had the Council's CDM contract at that time and quoted for both the development and delivery stages and by far the largest element of this has already been completed.

17. The development stage was completed within the stated timeframe and 26% under the budget forecast. The HLF awarded the project the full amount sought.

18. Given the success of the project at Stage 2 and the importance of continuity, it is considered very advantageous to retain the services of the former consultants for the Delivery Stage.

Contractors

19. The Stage 2 Bid included, *inter alia*, a Master Plan, with detailed costings, a project timetable with cash flow projections and a procurement strategy; the latter drawn up in conjunction with the Council's procurement team.

20. After planning permission and listed building consent have been obtained for the delivery phase, the consultant architect will be instructed to develop the scheme to RIBA Stage K to provide the drawings for the tender documents. The Council will manage the tender process for the main contractors for the capital works, and also for the later, smaller contract for the catering licence to run the café. The Council's own contractors will manage the tree work and the IT provision, whilst the members of the Steering Group will lead on the interpretation, with the design and technical expertise of the Council's Corporate Communications Team. A project manager will be employed prior to, and for the duration of, the works on site

21. Due to the short time frames and the complexity of the whole project, it would be very advantageous if the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services were to have delegated authority for the seeking and acceptance of tenders and the advertising of the Project Manager post.

Financial Implications

The detailed financial breakdown of the project is included within the private (Part 2) part of this agenda for Members' information only. This is to ensure taxpayers and the Council receive Value for Money in any forthcoming procurement exercises.

4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The HLF project will allow the future of the buildings at Eastcote House Gardens to be secured in perpetuity, whilst their repair and conversion to educational /community use and the enhanced proposals for the grounds, would provide an attractive facility for residents, community groups, schools, uniformed groups and visitors of all ages, background and disabilities, particularly those from other parts of the Borough. The site would provide a very attractive location for events and a training ground for volunteers in horticulture, archaeology and other disciplines. It is very unusual to be able to provide an opportunity for residents to take part in archaeological excavations and the trial excavations in July 2012 demonstrated that this is likely to be very popular indeed.

The interiors of the Stables and Dovecote are particularly fine but not generally open to the public at the present time. This project would enable them to be enjoyed and understood by visitors to the park, through enhanced interpretation and guided walks, leaflets and lectures. The Friends are already being approached by prospective hirers of the Stables, once they are repaired and upgraded.

The repair and re-use of the buildings, the enhanced community involvement described in the Activity Plan and the security measures to be undertaken, would also help deter the vandalism and address the safety issues which have beleaguered the site in recent years.

Such a project could significantly enhance the site and would provide through the support of external funding partners, significant value for money for the Council.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Steering Group of Eastcote House Buildings and Gardens, comprising the Ward Councillors, Chairman of the Friends Group, the Chairman of Eastcote Park Estate Residents Association, past Chairman of the Eastcote Village Residents Association, the Chair of the Eastcote Conservation Panel, the Secretary of the Northwood, Eastcote and Ruislip Local History Society, members of the Friends and officers from English Heritage and the Council's own Conservation, Green Spaces and Community Engagement teams, have played an active role in forming the proposals for the Stage 2 Bid and most of the Group have been involved in the project since January 2010.

Visitor surveys have been undertaken on the site and during events by the Council's Community Engagement Team. A large public consultation was carried out in September and October 2012, the results of which were reported to Cabinet in November 2012. Residents were given an update on how their voices had been heard and the plans changed accordingly, at a meeting in January 2013.

There is much local interest in the project now and expectations are high. Even greater numbers are volunteering on the Gardening and River Project days and many have discovered the Gardens through the many events put on by the Friends Group.

5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

The Council has been successful in securing £1,286,600 Heritage Lottery funding to support the major heritage project at Eastcote House Gardens. Resources are already in place to meet the majority of the match funding requirement, with funding for the remaining £65,000 revenue costs over five years to be identified through the Council's MTFP process.

Legal

Responsibility for accepting external grant funding, where the Council is required to match, or contribute funds, rests with the Cabinet.

This report indicates that the consultants that are to be "retained" have existing contracts that contain a break clause. This report indicates that the break clauses will not be exercised which will enable the existing contracts to continue in accordance with their existing terms. However, should any new or substantially amended contracts be needed in order to "retain" any consultants, then new procurement exercises would need to be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract and Procurement Standing Orders and, depending on the value of the contracts, the EU public procurement rules.

In order to deliver the next phase of this project, a number of new contracts will need to be entered into along with other service providers. These contracts must be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract and Procurement Standing Orders and, depending on the value of the contracts, the EU public procurement rules.

The Council's Contract and Procurement Standing Orders set out the levels of authority required to accept tenders and award contracts. The highest level of authority is for contracts which exceed a value of £250,000 and decisions on these contracts are to be made by the Cabinet. However, it is within the power of the Cabinet to delegate specific decisions to the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Resident Services as proposed in this report.

With regards to the overall decision to proceed with this project, the Council as land owner has the power to carry out improvement works subject to complying with all applicable laws. In this regard, it is noted that Eastcote House Gardens is a listed building and as such planning consent and listed building consent will be required prior to works commencing. Carrying out works that affect the character of a listed building without prior consent is a criminal offence.

Corporate Property and Construction

Corporate Property and Construction have been working closely with the Planning Specialists and Green Spaces Teams to advance the Heritage Lottery Fund project and are fully in support of the proposals set out in the Stage 2 Application.

These listed buildings have been a Council liability for many years. It is considered that the proposals would enable them to be put into a good state repair, with future uses which would benefit the whole community and enable them to enjoy these historic structures. The proposals would make the best use of Council assets, add to their value and, in the short term, reduce future spend on maintenance.

Relevant Service Groups

Green Spaces officers have been represented on the Steering Group throughout the project and are fully in support the recommendations made in this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL