

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 7 JUNE 2019

REPORT BY CLLR GRAHAM MCANDREW (Executive Member)

CASTLE PARK HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND IMPROVEMENTS –
ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: BISHOP'S STORTFORD MEADS

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To seek support for the allocation of additional expenditure to meet a funding gap between the existing council contribution and the final value of the HLF grant to carry out improvement works to the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That:

(A)	Capital funding of £124k is made available in 2019/20 to bridge the funding gap to enable the HLF project at Castle Park to proceed.
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1.0 Background

1.1 A bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has successfully secured a grant of £1.9m to transform Castle Park in Bishop's Stortford. A wide range of improvements developed in partnership with Bishop's Stortford Town Council will combine two existing open spaces into one destination park to serve the town.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 On 5 January 2016, Executive resolved to accept the terms and conditions of the grant and to submit the project for inclusion in the Council's Capital Programme for 2017/18.
- 2.2 This included a contribution of £23,918 in 2017/18 to match fund the first HLF grant payment of £214,700. That stage 1 development phase allowed the Council to develop their plans for the project, engaging designers, consulting with the public and preparing detailed costs for the works.
- 2.3 A sum of £168,750 was also set aside to match fund the stage 2 grant, should it be awarded, to begin delivering the project in 2019/20. HLF confirmed in December 2018 that our application to move to stage 2 had been successful. Work will commence in April 2019 pending planning approval.
- 2.4 The budgets that were developed to bid for a grant from the HLF were based upon estimates obtained prior to survey or consultation works. The sum of £168,750 was calculated as a percentage of the originally estimated build cost which has now increased.
The bid needed to present costs which reflected the wide scope of the project in relation to the stringent HLF criteria. The budget was realistic but there were some unknown quantities. One of these was how to transform the tired buildings, crucial in the eyes of HLF to the success of the project, without adding disproportionately to the grant request. Another was to relocate the tennis courts, without losing support for the wider scheme and without attracting criticism from Sport England in our planning application. The improvements were carefully prioritised and designed to minimise cost.
- 2.5 The initial building designs, whilst exciting and compliant of the brief, proved to be considerably over budget at £1.2m. The revised design delivers the same crucial community and

sustainability outcomes by repurposing the existing structures. It still however exceeds the initial estimate budget of £300,000 by £188,000. The relocation of the tennis courts is fundamental to the success of the project, but as the new location has to be outside the project boundary, it cannot be funded by HLF. The bridge has been refined to a more simple and economical design. Conservation costs in relation to the castle were budgeted at £200,000 under the guidance of Historic England but have been reduced by £56,000 through the tender process and by achieving some works as part of the first phase surveys. The final designs for all building, landscape, historical restoration, environmental and community engagement elements achieved some further savings and reallocation of funds where possible. Despite these efficiencies there is still a shortfall of **£124,000**.

- 2.6 The council have been awarded a grant of up to £1,939,700.00 (73% of the total eligible project cost of £2,667,800.00) towards the project. The total contribution from the council needed in 2019/20 is now therefore £292,760. It is proposed that the additional £124,000 is allocated from the Priority Funding Reserve (previously New Homes Bonus). The following table puts this into perspective against the overall costs, grant funding and contributions from both partners:

Delivery Stage Project Finance	
<u>Costs:</u>	
Community Centre Building	£488,000
Bridge	£217,100
Tennis Courts (3 courts) (including allowance of £10,000 for eradication of Japanese Knotweed)	£141,000
Management and maintenance	£26,400
All other works	£1,665,300
Total Capital Works	£2,537,800
Estimated Volunteer Time	£130,000
Total Costs:	£2,667,800

<u>Income:</u>	
Parks for People HLF Grant:	£1,939,700
Contribution from Bishop's Stortford Town Council	£200,000
Contribution from East Herts District Council	£167,000
Section 106 funding (3/14/0978/FP Redrow Homes, Trinity Close)	£50,700
Management & maintenance (EHC grounds revenue expenditure)	£26,400
Café Operator Contribution	£30,000
Estimated Volunteer Time (Benefit in kind)	£130,000
Total Income:	£2,513,800
Shortfall in Income (funding gap)	£124,000

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Bishop's Stortford is undergoing rapid change and there is a need to ensure the park and its heritage capitalise upon this to become a central focus of the town. An expanding population means that there is an ever increasing need for well-designed greenspace.

3.2 There is an urgent need for conservation work to Waytemore Castle, which is at risk of irreversible damage due to vegetation growth and vandalism.

3.3 The project will:

- Protect the ancient monument for the future and improve access to and allow people to learn and understand about its heritage and importance
- Rejuvenate the River Stort supporting the Waterside Stortford initiative and creating access to the water's edge
- Make significant Improvements to biodiversity and the ecology of the park
- Renovate existing buildings on the site including the council's obsolete toilet block and provide a functional and multi-use facility for the community

- Improve connectivity across the park with new footpaths, a new bridge and a revised landscape around the war memorial
- Create a new event space, open up views all around the park to the ancient monument and deliver improved tennis facilities
- Transform facilities for young people
- Engage with local people through a series of events, activities and volunteering opportunities through a new Friends Group
- Improve health through improved play and exercise facilities, a new programme of health walks and a new cycle path

3.5 In summary, a revised council contribution of £292,760 unlocks overall improvements to the value of £2,667,800 representing a significant return on investment.

3.6 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Executive Item 493. Waytemore Castle Improvement Project HLF Bid:
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=119&MID=2632&J=9#A115026>

Latest information about the project:
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/castlepark>

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