

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting

Subject: Victoria Park HLF Bid

Date of meeting 8 December 2017

Report by: Director of Culture and City Development

Wards affected: Charles Dickens

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek endorsement for submission of a Round 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Victoria Park and seek to secure the required match funding should the bid be successful.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member endorses the submission of a Round 1 application and instructs officers to secure match funding through the city council's Capital Bid process.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Victoria Park was created as Portsmouth's first public park, laid out on the city's former dockyard fortifications, and opened to the public on 25 May 1878.
- 3.2 The land was acquired by the city council to address concern at the time of the health and leisure habits of working class people in the city and to encourage rational forms of recreation. The land held a covenant to reflect its public recreational use and the development was for a 'People's Park'.
- 3.3 The original layout was designed by renowned Victorian landscape architect, Alexander McKenzie, who is best-known for his design work on Alexandra Palace, Finsbury Park and Southwark Park.

- 3.4 The park's original formal design included a tree-lined central avenue, bandstand, ornamental planting, open lawns, network of footpaths and a lodge. Over the coming years there were additions of a commemorative fountain, memorials, boundary railings, glasshouses and an aviary.
- 3.5 The park contains ten grade-II listed monuments commemorating ships, people and events in Portsmouth's history and the aviary has been a significant attraction over the years with a wide ranging collection of birds.
- 3.6 Victoria Park is one of Portsmouth's three grade-II listed parks and gardens within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens held by English Heritage for its special historic interest and measures approximately 3.5 Hectares in size. It lies within Conservation Area 18 - 'Guildhall and Victoria Park'.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The park has been a prominent feature in the centre of Portsmouth for almost 140 years and whilst the dynamics of the surrounding urban environment have evolved, its primary role as a space for outdoor leisure and recreation activities has not fundamentally changed. It contributes towards the health and wellbeing of the residents in the most densely populated city outside of London.
- 4.2 McKenzie's original layout is largely intact, but several key features such as the bandstand have been lost over the years, and others such as the central avenue, memorials and fountain losing prominence or in need significant restoration work. Unsympathetic changes and widespread tree planting in more recent times mean the original design is gradually being lost and risk compromising the heritage of the park.
- 4.3 Strategic Planning documents have acknowledged the significance of the park with the City Centre Masterplan and Victoria Park Action Plan. These documents have recognised the additional pressures surrounding development will place on the park and opportunity for ensuring the park is able to remain a significant community green space for the future. The park is well used as both a destination and as a through route, with a large residential population within 5-10 minutes walking distance and an anticipated additional 2,500 students accommodated in a number of recent, current and planned nearby developments.
- 4.4 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Parks for People programme is designed to help conserve valued places at the centre of communities, with grants ranging from £100,000 to £5,000,000. The next deadline for submission of a Round 1 application is 28 February 2018.
- 4.5 Following an initial meeting with the Head of the HLF, officers visited Kearsney Parks project in Dover to meet the project manager, Jon Winder, with Dover District Council having been successful in securing £3.1M funding, to learn from their success and review bid relevant documentation.

4.6 The Parks Service have engaged Jon Winder on a consultancy basis to jointly develop proposals that will enable a Round 1 bid to be submitted and that would deliver a range of activities and capital works to restore, improve and celebrate the heritage of Victoria Park.

4.7 A Round 1 bid is to demonstrate the need and opportunities that exist and to set out the differences an HLF funded project will bring to the heritage, people and local communities, so that the park can meet the needs of the parks increased users and attract more diverse audiences.

The Capital works proposed for the project include:

- restoration of the grade-II listed monuments, fountain and flag pole
- reinstatement of the central tree-lined avenue
- recreating a performance space on the site of the former bandstand
- removal of redundant and inappropriate buildings
- creation of an education and volunteering hub that includes toilets and focusses on growing, ecology and wildlife
- improvements to the park infrastructure, including the southern footpath that is prone to flooding
- developing a young children's play area
- improvements to the four access points to make them more inviting
- incorporating green measures such as recycling and on-site composting

The activities proposed for the project include:

- community heritage days
- establishing a Friends Group for the park
- working with local groups to develop a programme of activity days, community and commercial events
- outreach work to help overcome barriers to increased use of the park
- a schools programme to promote outdoor learning alongside recreation
- development of a volunteer programme for residents, park users and students
- development of a supported volunteer programme (extension of the opportunities available at the Waterfront Garden Centre)
- offering work experience placements and horticultural apprenticeships
- interpretation of the park's heritage

4.8 A history paper has been researched and prepared by James Daly (Culture and City Development) that will be used to support an application, detailing many of the historical events and stories and that will serve as a reference document for the works, activities and for further volunteer research should the project proceed.

- 4.9 If the Round 1 bid is submitted and successful, it will enable appointment of additional dedicated staff to undertake the 'Development Phase' over a period of 12-18 months. The outline proposals that have initiated from the Victoria Park Action Plan and Round 1 bid will be developed with the wider engagement of the community to form a Round 2 bid. A Community Engagement Officer would be one of the appointed roles to assist with this crucial phase.
- 4.10 The park is maintained to a high standard but existing revenue maintenance budgets are insufficient to address the changes that are necessary to cope with the significant increase in use surrounding development will bring and to better engage it's historical, recreational and educational offer with local residents.
- 4.11 The city council would be expected to contribute a minimum 10% towards the cost of the development phase and the delivery phase. It is envisaged the project bid will be in the region of £2.5M, requiring a contribution of £250k, or greater if not seeking the maximum grant percentage award.
- 4.12 A successful bid and project will meet several objectives of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, help secure a Green Flag Award, ensure continued delivery of high horticultural standards, create training and education and better engage the diverse local community with activities for young people, students, volunteers and Friends, improve sustainability and introduce measures to manage the impacts of climate change.

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as the recommendations to not have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The Parks for People scheme is implemented by the New Parks for People (England) Joint Scheme (Authorisation) Order 2013/1098. The Order (as enabled by schedule 3A of the National Lottery Act 1993) is still in force and acts as the legislative authority for the scheme distributing money to successful applicants with the aim of enhancing the quality and use of public parks.
- 6.2 The terms and conditions of the grant may impose certain provisions and procedures being satisfied by the Council (for example certain procurement requirements). Therefore when the terms and conditions are made available these should be reviewed by the relevant department to ensure that the Council has adequate provisions in place to meet these.
- 6.3 If successful the Authority will be obliged to contribute at least 10% towards the cost of the development and delivery phases. The 10% may be comprised of cash, volunteer time, non-cash contributions or a combination of these. It should

be considered at an early stage what internal authority the Council will require in order to approve the allocation of this.

7. Director of Finance comments

- 7.1 The costs associated with the preparation of the round 1 application to the HLF for Victoria Park will be met from existing Parks budgets. A budget has been identified to meet the costs of the consultant already engaged.
- 7.2 A PCC capital bid has been prepared and submitted for the £250,000 match funding needed to meet the terms of the HLF grant application requirements.
- 7.3 The capital programme will be approved by Full Council in mid-February 2018 which will be line with the Round 1 application deadline of 28 February 2018.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture and City Development

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport