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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
Subject:	Reviving Victoria Park Project
Date of meeting:	11th December 2020
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	Charles Dickens

1. Requested by

1.1 Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development.

2. Purpose

2.1 To provide an overview of the Reviving Victoria Park project including the purpose, project team recruitment, consultants engaged, progress to date and details of public consultation taken and planned.

3. Information Requested

3.1 The focus of the Reviving Victoria Park project is to restore the park to its original Victorian design, remove derelict buildings and create a new central hub, with the purpose of engaging the wider community in culture, heritage and education.

3.2 The project will uncover, restore, and celebrate the park's heritage and create a more inclusive space, so that more people can use the park and to improve their wellbeing. The project will include:

- dedicated outreach work with local communities which will identify and overcome barriers so that the visitor profile more closely matches the catchment area population
- a new educational programme and classroom space will deliver unique learning opportunities for children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and a wider health and wellbeing programme for schools
- extending our highly successful Waterfront Garden Centre project to Victoria Park, plus new volunteering facilities, to meet demand for supported-volunteering opportunities and help overcome isolation

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- inclusive activities and interpretation which will transform visitors' engagement with the park, overcome barriers to greater use, and contribute to improved wellbeing
- restoration of Alexander McKenzie's historic design and infrastructure improvements will mitigate against increased use, improve accessibility, enhance environmental performance and tackle the effects of climate change
- additional staff, a horticultural apprenticeship, a new Friends group and income generation opportunities will improve resilience, increase skills and ensure the sustainability of project outcomes

3.3 PCC secured £251,000 Round 1 funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) at the end of 2019. This funding will enable the city council to test the thesis submitted to the NLHF outlining the project. In the application PCC committed to meeting nine NLHF approved outcomes that it must continue to work towards to remain a viable and funded project. The outcomes are summarised in Appendix A.

3.4 At the end of phase one, the project team will submit a second application for Round 2 funding in excess of £2M. If successful, the thesis that has been tested and plans consulted on in phase one, can be implemented in phase two.

3.5 The Project Manager (Laura Young) joined PCC in April to oversee the phase one work, on a fixed-term contract that will be extended if PCC are successful and if so, will also oversee phase two. In September the project team expanded with the recruitment of a Community Engagement Officer (Jackie Collins) who was employed on the same terms. Jackie will manage the relationships in the community and champion the voice of key audiences throughout the project.

3.6 Throughout the summer four different consultant teams were procured:

- Arkwood, led by landscape architects Jon Sheaff and Associates, were awarded the Design Team contract
- LUC will review all of the heritage on site and produce a conservation plan and a management and maintenance plan
- Julia Holberry and Associates will produce an activity and events plan for the duration of the project and the interpretation plan, which will consider how best to engage our audiences with the stories the park holds
- Anna Cullum and Pam Jarvis will undertake the NLHF mandated evaluation throughout the lifetime of the project. This will ensure clear and evidenced impact reporting and that the project remains on track to meet its objectives

3.7 A summary of progress to date:

- Project Board has been assembled: Cllr Steve Pitt, Stephen Baily, Adrian Rozier, Anna Limburn, Laura Young, Jackie Collins
- Procurement of consultant teams and the surveys required to inform their work
- Internal stakeholder consultation undertaken by project team and consultants has commenced and will finish before Christmas

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- Connections established with community partners such as The Hive, Portsea Events Group, Portsea Action Group, Aspex Gallery, National Museum of the Royal Navy
- Relationships built with key stakeholders such as University of Portsmouth, St John's Cathedral, Royal Navy, Portsmouth Students Union, Society of St James
- Communications strategy built with internal Communications Team and project team
- Project team are working in partnership with consultants to identify, secure existing and collect new data necessary to create first drafts of consultant plans and support the Round 2 application to the NLHF
- Detailed stakeholder analysis undertaken and relationships established with key community figures, groups and colleagues
- The Park website and social media pages have been prepared and launched
- Early work started with interested members of the community to establish a 'Friends of Victoria Park' group, which will support and champion the project. Individuals will take on roles suited to their skills and interests
- Volunteers who wish to support the project or park in some way have started to be identified, reducing cost to the project and PCC and enabling additional works such as an aural history project

3.8 Covid-19 and the resulting lockdowns and restrictions have had a considerable impact on the project. The main knock-on effect is to the timeline and the order in which works can take place. However there are some tasks, like the facilitation of community workshops, which cannot be re-planned within the programme. The project team have worked with Arkwood to create contingency plans for online and paper-based co-design and although the risks are mitigated, the quality of the co-design and/or strength of community connection and backing may be impacted.

3.9 Each consultant team must undertake various forms of public consultation throughout phase one (which is currently projected to complete in September 2021, but is subject to further disruption due to Covid-19). The first consultation was a baseline face-to-face survey in Victoria Park over the October half-term, which had the necessary social distancing and safety measures in place (and following approval by the Project Board and GOLD Command). This survey achieved 227 respondents and was completed before the second lockdown was introduced.

3.10 The next consultation will be a more in depth online survey which will be pushed through multiple PCC channels. The project team will work with partner organisations to share this survey offline, to engage those without the internet, or inclination to participate online. Although this survey has been created by Julia Holberry and Associates, they have worked with all the consultant teams to meet a broader remit, whilst face-to-face options are not viable.

3.11 The further consultation requirement is co-design workshops, which are the most complex to run in the current environment. Whilst this can work digitally, efforts will be

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made to ensure this will not exclude those with technological or intellectual barriers. Any solution must engage an adequate cross-section of the community from Charles Dickens ward. Despite a reduction in the quality of debate, online workshops are the most viable alternative. However, these cannot be truly representative and the project team are working with community and disability partners to design paper and telephone workshops.

3.12 In the spring the project team will review if it can begin to plan for in person events to coincide with the presenting of co-design ideas.

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Signed
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:

Appendix A Victoria Park Project Summary

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