

**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

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

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Briefing Meeting
<b>Subject:</b>	Reviving Victoria Park Project
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	17 March 2023
<b>Report by:</b>	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	Charles Dickens

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**1. Requested by**

1.1 Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development

**2. Purpose**

2.1 To provide an updated overview of progress on the Reviving Victoria Park project

**3. Information Requested**

3.1 The Reviving Victoria Park project will restore the park to its original Victorian design, repair historic memorials, provide new play opportunities and create a new central hub building, with facilities to engaging the wider community in culture, heritage and education activities.

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 to improve their wellbeing. The project will include:

3.2.1 Dedicated outreach work with local communities which will identify and overcome barriers so that the visitor profile more closely matches the catchment area population

3.2.2 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

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- 3.2.3 Inclusive activities and interpretation which will transform visitors' engagement with the park, overcome barriers to greater use, and contribute to improved wellbeing
- 3.2.4 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
- 3.2.5 Additional staff and volunteers, 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 After considerable community engagement, site investigations and specialist design work between 2018 and 2021, PCC initially secured £2.27m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to deliver the project between 2022 and 2026. In October 2022 PCC applied for a further £157,612 to cover increased costs due to inflation. Our application was successful, bringing the total grant awarded to £2.43m.

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- 3.4 This funding has supported the following work to date:
- 3.4.1 The appointment of four members of staff - a Project Manager, Community Engagement Officer and Volunteer & Training Coordinator for the duration of the project, as well as a Horticultural Apprentice for 18 months.
  - 3.4.2 The completion of detailed designs by the external design team for the restoration and improvement works and onsite interpretation scheme.
  - 3.4.3 The appointment of local construction company DM Habens as main contractor. DM Habens included a strong social value statement in their tender and are committed to working with the Friends of Victoria Park, our volunteers and local residents to ensure a deeper involvement in heritage, community and the environment. They are currently running a drawing competition for children and adults alike. Winner's work will be printed onto the site hoarding. They are committed to running events whilst they work with PCC. These include bird watching, litter picking and offsetting their carbon footprint with planting in the city.
  - 3.4.4 A range of community activities including liaison with local organisations and stakeholders, monthly Friends meetings and diverse programme of events and activities in the park. Most recently the project team worked with DM Habens to deliver a public exhibition, giving residents an opportunity to view detailed plans and discuss the changes. The Community Engagement Officer is working with community partners such as Shaping Portsmouth, Portsmouth Ambassadors, RSPB, MAKE and Trash Arts to co-create a comprehensive programme of free events and activities.
  - 3.4.5 A volunteer recruitment drive to support the delivery of the project, including event stewards, historical researchers, community gardeners and website and social media administrators. To date, we have received 22 expressions of interest, with 8 volunteers signed up so far. Volunteers have already delivered walks and talks in the park, focusing on the many trees from around the world and the animals the park is home to. We are now preparing to launch our park maintenance and heritage research projects.
  - 3.4.6 Onsite and online communication about the project, including a project website (<https://victoriaparkportsmouth.org.uk/>), social media and email newsletter
  - 3.4.7 The planting of 29 new trees to begin our works to restore the grandeur of the central avenue and increase the biodiversity in the park.
- 3.5 The funding will support a range of capital works, activities and events over the next four years including:

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**3.5.1 Winter 2023**

- Main capital works started onsite in January
- Demolition of the dilapidated green houses in the maintenance yard is complete
- Tree protections are in place
- Site set up and preparations are underway
- New community building works will commence
- Outdoor activity and events programme underway
- Volunteer recruitment drive
- Interpretation plans finalised and procurement will commence
- Fountain restoration specialist procurement

**3.5.2 Summer 2023**

- Interpretation works start onsite
- Entrance and railing improvement works commence
- New planting preparation works commence
- Fountain restoration works commence

**3.5.3 Autumn 2023**

- Capital and interpretation work complete
- Site wide planting works commence
- The Green House, our new community hub in Victoria Park, opening celebration
- Full activity programme launches using the Green House, including educational programme, community events and stakeholder projects

**3.5.4 Autumn 2023 - Winter 2025/26**

- Ongoing activities, events, training and volunteering programme

**3.5.5 Winter 2025/26**

- Project completes



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Signed by

**Stephen Baily**

**Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services**

**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:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>