

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	12 March 2018
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Business Operations
Subject	-	Coastal Environments Corporate Project – East Parade, Bexhill

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) it be noted that full Council has already agreed to set aside £295,000 in the Capital Programme from the car parks earmarked reserves to progress Project A;
 - 2) subject to Cabinet approval of Project A, the Bexhill Sea Angling Club (BSAC) be authorised to confirm RDC's £295,000 contribution to lever in match funding from external grant awarding bodies;
 - 3) subject to BSAC securing funding for their element, an architect be procured by Rother District Council to progress the scheme to the detailed design phase, including planning permission, and project delivery, to be funded from the capital allocation; and
 - 4) the remaining three projects (B, C and D as outlined within the report) being planned to address the heritage and environment of East Parade be further developed and brought before Members as appropriate.
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Service Manager: Brenda Mason

Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Ian Hollidge

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Corporate Plan, Coastal Environments corporate project and to seek approval for capital works to East Parade.

Background: East Parade, Bexhill

2. A series of town centre regeneration and planning studies have identified that the quality and accessibility of the public realm and historic environment are key factors in enhancing the economy of the town, attracting visitors and improving footfall. The seafront, undoubtedly the town's greatest cultural asset, is a key focus for many of the Council's significant regeneration initiatives in recent years.
3. Members previously approved the delivery of the East Parade Heritage Project (Minute CB15/20 refers), for the conservation, restoration, interpretation and improvement of the cultural heritage of East Parade.

£15,000 was approved from Rother District Council (RDC) funds for the community engagement and funding application work, and subject to a successful application, a further £53,000 was approved as match funding towards the project. Applications were made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2016. However, due to high demand and strong competition they were unsuccessful.

4. In order to achieve the intended objectives for East Parade, the project plan has been revisited in order to facilitate delivery through four smaller, distinct projects, which will allow efficient use of existing RDC resources and increase opportunities for several smaller grant applications for external funding. Whilst closely aligned, the projects each have separate aims that make them more likely to receive support from various grant-making organisations.
5. Based on the community engagement consultancy work carried out in 2015, the four proposed projects are as follows:
 - **Project A – Bexhill East Beach:** improvements to create a mini-destination and seafront users 'hub' at the easternmost end of East Parade, incorporating the car park, adjacent public realm and a new Bexhill Sea Angling Club building.
 - **Project B – East Parade Heritage Project:** repair, restoration and conservation of the four, Grade II listed seafront shelters, along with a community heritage project to create Heritage Trails, both digital and physical interpretation. This will be delivered through working with community groups including Bexhill Museum and the recently formed Bexhill Heritage group. An invitation to tender for a condition survey and repair and maintenance specification has been issued to architects and surveyors, and officers expect to appoint a practice very shortly. Once the extent of the repair and restoration works and their associated costs are known, officers will seek out the most appropriate funding in order to deliver this community-based heritage project.
 - **Project C – East Parade Landscape Uplift:** aligned closely with the Heritage Project, this element will look at introducing a more cohesive approach to the soft and hard landscape, keeping any design sympathetic to the promenade's unique heritage. Officers have assessed the existing landscape and features, and are currently investigating potential options for enhancing this area, alongside identifying appropriate potential funding.
 - **Project D – De La Warr Parade Ornamental Lighting:** working with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and the Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group (BTCSSG) to ensure the ornamental street lighting is maintained consistently along this stretch of highway. There are currently five street lamps along De La Warr Parade that have unfortunately been replaced by ESCC with 'standard' brackets and lamps. It is ESCC policy to only replace lamps with standard options unless another party, such as the local authority or a community group, can fund the difference between that and an ornamental option. Officers are currently liaising with ESCC to negotiate a financial contribution to replace the five standard lamps with ornamental ones to match the rest of the Parade. It is expected that a portion of the £20,000 Section 106 money allocated for public realm in Bexhill will be used to fund this work (Minute CB17/39 refers). Going

forward, RDC and ESCC officers will implement a framework to improve communication and ensure cohesive working for non-standard lamps requiring replacement in the future. This is likely to form part of the Public Realm Strategy that is currently in development.

6. Whilst significant work has been undertaken in-house to advance projects B and C, they are currently still in research and project planning stages, therefore it is expected that these will be brought before Members for approval as appropriate when they are ready. Project D can progress as soon as a negotiated agreement between ESCC and RDC is reached. Project A has been worked on in more detail and is the main subject of the rest of this report.

Project A: Bexhill East Beach

7. The site of the Bexhill East Beach project lies at the eastern end of East Parade, Bexhill and is defined on the attached map, Appendix 1. The whole site is owned by RDC, and the existing Clubhouse and some adjacent land is let to the Bexhill Sea Angling Club (BSAC), on a 28 years' lease from 1996.
8. In terms of appearance and visitor offer, the existing Sea Angling clubhouse and associated areas of car parking offer a poor terminus to the promenade from the west, and an uninspiring welcome as approached from the east. The car park is not formalised, and the surface is currently very uneven. There is no clear direction from Galley Hill towards the East Parade promenade, and the various surfaces in this location are not particularly good for accessibility.
9. The BSAC clubhouse is dated and no longer suitable to meet the needs of the growing club, particularly the increasing youth membership. There has also been interest from Hadlow College in Kent for BSAC to run a coastal and maritime education programme for their students. The current lack of flexibility in the facility could prevent this from being delivered.
10. In 2016, BSAC Committee Members approached RDC estates and planning to request permission for a cabin unit to be installed in order to provide a separate space for the youth members to learn and train. The social club could then continue to operate when juniors are present. This was agreed for a period of up to three years, in order to allow them to develop plans for a more permanent and suitable accommodation solution. Planning permission and Cabinet approval for the lease was granted in October and November 2016 respectively (Minute CB16/47 refers).

Concept Design Statement

11. A concept design statement is a document produced by an architect following research with the client in terms of needs, issues and opportunities. It provides an overview of the existing site or buildings and demonstrates options that could be considered. The client's preferred option is worked through in enough detail to be able to produce an estimated outline budget and a delivery timeframe. At concept design stage, there may be elements included to show the overall potential of the project, but that may not be included in the final detailed design, for instance the public conveniences.
12. In 2017, RDC officers and BSCA worked with an architect to produce a concept design statement for the site, with the objectives as follows:

- Create an attractive 'destination' space/place to define this end of East Parade, responding to the mix of users of the promenade, including walkers and cyclists on the Coastal Culture Trail and the Connect2 cycle route.
 - Improve and extend the BSAC accommodation and facility offer.
 - Provide public facilities including a refreshment kiosk and external seating area and to consider fully accessible public conveniences (replacing those at East Parade, not in addition to the existing facilities).
 - Formalise off street car-parking facilities.
 - Incorporate pedestrian signage.
13. The resulting Bexhill East Beach Concept Design Statement is attached to this report as Appendix 2. The architects have brought a fresh vision and practical approach to the requirements of the brief. The overall budget for Project A is broadly estimated at £694,500, of which up to £265,000 is allocated to the RDC elements for the car park and associated public realm and public facilities – proposed refreshment outlet and optional public conveniences. A share of the associated fees and consultant costs, and a small contingency, would bring the RDC required capital investment to up to £295,000.
14. In anticipation of this report being presented to Members, provision of £295,000 was included in the Capital Programme approved by full Council on 26 February. Therefore assuming Members are supportive of the proposals, the scheme can commence.

Public Conveniences

15. Feedback from the community engagement showed that seafront users felt that the current public conveniences on East Parade, although functional are not comfortable or accessible. There is a separate disabled block, however the main male and female PCs are both accessed by steps which some people find challenging.
16. Subject to finding an alternative use for the existing public convenience building, it is proposed that new individually contained unisex facilities, all suitable for use by those with disabilities, incorporated into the footprint of a new Angling Club building would improve the offer at this key access point to the town via the coastal path. There would be no communal areas to attract loitering or vandalism, and therefore it is expected that a new provision could be more cost effective to run and maintain. However, unisex facilities are not always popular, although more common these days.
17. Options for alternative uses for the existing toilet block would be investigated within projects B and C and form part of those projects proposals, and could generate a small additional income if let out for a commercial venture. No decision has yet been finalised on the public convenience provision.

Income and outcomes

18. Income is expected to be generated from the car parks and kiosk as described below:

19. **Car park:** The concept design statement allows for around 40 spaces to be provided in the available space. Taking existing car park income data, the lowest net income we could expect (taking into account all costs) would be £9,900 per annum. A less cautious estimation, based on an average of our highest and lowest use car parks, would indicate a net annual income of up to £22,100 per annum. Car park use and projected income would be subject to the Civil Parking Enforcement Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendations, to be presented to Cabinet in April 2018.
20. **Kiosk:** Based on data of existing seafront and parks kiosks, we could expect a rental income between £2,500 and £5,000 per annum.
21. **Broad outcomes:** In addition to an annual revenue income for the Council, there are a number of wider benefits that this project will realise, which are outcomes of the RDC Corporate Plan 2014-21, including:
 - The creation of a sense of place, setting East Parade as a key heritage and cultural location on the Coastal Culture Trail – increasing visitors and supporting the local tourist economy;
 - Providing a coastal 'gateway' to Bexhill for those using active transport (walking, running, cycling);
 - Enabling the attraction of possible external grant funding;
 - Job creation (kiosk/refreshment outlet);
 - Supporting the growth of a long-standing local sporting club; and
 - Increased active lifestyles and marine environment awareness for local young people.

Next Steps

22. The BSAC project team is currently developing a club development and business plan and a funding strategy for their elements of the scheme. Subject to Members' support for the scheme, it is proposed that the BSAC confirm RDC's £295,000 contribution to lever in match funding from external grant awarding bodies.
23. Once BSAC has secured funding for their element, an architect would be procured by Rother District Council, to take the scheme as a whole to the detailed design phase, including planning permission, and project delivery. The fees will be paid from within the capital allocation with all fees and consents being shared by both parties as per paragraph 13.
24. Alongside this, the remaining three projects (as outlined at paragraph 5) being planned to address the heritage and environment of East Parade will be further developed and brought before Members as appropriate.
25. All four projects will be centrally managed, monitored and reported through the Council's Corporate Programme Governance and Monitoring framework.

Conclusion

26. East Parade is in a prominent location which forms part of several wider strategic schemes. This includes the Coastal Culture Trail, the Sustrans Cycle Route (Hastings & Bexhill Waterfront), the Combe Valley Countryside Park and the England Coastal Path. Delivery of this project will ensure that

RDC can support and benefit from the overall outcomes for culture, tourism and economic prosperity.

27. Investing £295,000 of capital funds from car parks earmarked reserves into this project could enable the generation of a net income from £12,400 (4%) to £27,100 (9%) per annum. This will help to deliver the aims of the Rother 2020 Programme. Alongside this, the project supports all four aims as set out in the Corporate Plan and will help to achieve the Vision for the District for 2021.

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director of Business Operations

Risk Assessment Statement

Any risk to the estimated return on investment will be mitigated through the careful creation of a robust business plan and project cost control. There are significant social and environmental benefits in addition to the financial return as this is a place-making project that will provide a lasting legacy for future generations.