

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	14 May 2018
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	CA4 04 Coastal Environments Corporate Project – East Parade

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 April 2018, considered a report on the CA4 04 Coastal Environments Corporate Project – East Parade. The recommendation and minute arising is reproduced below.

Recommendation to COUNCIL: That:

- 1) it be noted that £295,000 has been set aside by full Council 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 be authorised to confirm RDC's £295,000 contribution to lever in match funding from external grant awarding bodies;
 - 3) subject to Bexhill Sea Angling Club 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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OSC17/57. CA4 04 COASTAL ENVIRONMENTS CORPORATE PROJECT – EAST PARADE

Members received and considered Minute CB17/77 from the Cabinet meeting held on 12 March 2018 on delivery of the East Parade Heritage Project, for conservation, restoration, interpretation and improvement of the cultural heritage of East Parade. To ensure full participation by all Members, Cabinet referred the item to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for further consideration.

In 2015, Rother District Council (RDC) commenced an East Parade Study which incorporated a community engagement exercise. Members were advised that unfortunately, a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2016 had been unsuccessful; however, in order to achieve the intended objectives for East Parade, the project plan had been revisited to facilitate delivery through four smaller, distinct projects, using existing RDC resources and thereby increasing opportunities for several smaller grant applications for external funding.

The Chairman welcomed Cheryl Poole, the Council's Programme and Projects Officer and Julian Porter, the District Curator to the meeting who provided a detailed presentation on the history of East Parade and the Promenade, as well as the four heritage projects proposed. Councillor Hollidge, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Bexhill Town Centre was also in attendance.

The four projects proposed were:

- **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 (BSAC) 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.
- **Project C East Parade Landscape Uplift:** aligned closely with the Heritage Project, introduce a more cohesive approach to the soft and hard landscape, keeping any design sympathetic to the promenade's unique heritage.
- **Project D De La Warr Parade Ornamental Lighting:** work with East Sussex County Council and Bexhill Town Centre Steering Group to ensure ornamental street lighting (30 lanterns) was maintained consistently along this stretch of highway.

Members were advised that the site of Project A, Bexhill East Beach, was at the eastern end of East Parade, was owned by RDC, a portion of which was let to BSAC. Currently, the appearance and visitor offer at this end of the promenade was a poor terminus from the west, and an uninspiring welcome as approached from the east.

In 2017, RDC officers and BSAC worked with an architect to produce a Bexhill East Beach Concept Design Statement for the site, attached as Appendix 2 to the report, with the following objectives:

- 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; and
- incorporate pedestrian signage.

The overall budget for Project A was estimated at £694,500, of which up to £265,000 was allocated to RDC elements for the car park, public facilities, proposed refreshment outlet and optional public conveniences. A share of the associated fees and consultant costs, and a small contingency, would bring RDC's required capital investment up to £295,000. Members noted that this had already been approved as part of the Capital Programme.

The BSAC project team was 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, BSAC would use RDC's £295,000 contribution to lever in match funding from external grant awarding bodies. Once BSAC had secured funding for their element, an architect would be procured by RDC to take the scheme as a whole to the detailed design phase, including planning permission, and project delivery.

Projects B, C and D were currently in the research and planning stages.

Following the presentation, Members had an opportunity to put forward questions and the following points were noted during the discussion:

- ensure that projects considered all disability access issues including improvements to pedestrian areas to improve movement along East Parade without removing heritage features;
- important that the design concept was linked to the Connect2 coastal traffic-free cycle route;
- improve visitor attraction and encourage economic growth to Bexhill;
- some Members expressed concern that the design of BSAC clubhouse was too modernistic and not sympathetic with the heritage theme, whilst others thought it fitted well in this area, as there was no heritage assets in this part of the promenade and had design merit;
- keeping within budgets it was hoped that attractive floral designs and sympathetic landscaping could be incorporated into Project C;
- assurance was sought that the railings along East Parade would be retained. Members were advised that the railings would be retained and repaired as appropriate;
- retention of ornamental street lighting enhanced ambience of the scheme;
- important that the public were supportive of the proposed scheme;
- improvements to public conveniences was essential; and
- income generation opportunities were achievable from the car park, kiosk and hire of BSAC clubhouse facilities.

Councillor Hollidge acknowledged the OSC's comments and understood the sensitivities expressed to ensure that the projects were in-keeping with the heritage theme.

Concerns were also raised regarding the condition of the seafront shelters (rust) and deteriorating promenade surfaces along West Parade.

Members were supportive and sympathetic of Project A, but requested that the architects reconsidered the design of the clubhouse to be sympathetic with the heritage theme. It was noted that progression of Projects B, C and D would be reported to the OSC at a future meeting.

The Chairman thanked Cheryl Poole and Julian Porter for attending the meeting and providing an interesting and comprehensive presentation.

(Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda Item 5).

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director