

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community Services Cabinet Committee

Date: 7 February 2019

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Heritage Property Assets

Purpose and summary of report:

To give an overview of the council's heritage related property assets and the actions that are being taken to maintain and enhance them.

Recommendations:

1. That the council's approach to strategy outlined in paragraph 1.4 be noted and commented upon.

1. Overview

- 1.1 The council owns and has the responsibility for managing and maintaining a number of heritage related properties which require ongoing works to their fabric. These are either listed buildings or scheduled ancient monuments and they vary from larger sites and premises to a number of statues and war memorials.
- 1.2 These assets are each unique and contribute to telling Gravesham's story, however they can be challenging to manage and costly to maintain, especially in the current financial climate where resources are scarce. The council also has a responsibility to set an example to other bodies and individuals who own heritage assets in the manner in which they are maintained.
- 1.3 Whilst these heritage assets are generally structurally sound, recent works have tended to be limited to those that have reacted to the symptoms rather than the causes of any problems with these structures. Progress is now being made to put in place a medium to longer term strategy with the aim of reducing reactive repairs and maintenance.
- 1.4 The strategy encompasses the following:
 - 1.4.1 A cyclical programme of condition surveys which can inform the council's medium and longer-term capital programme.
 - 1.4.2 Establishment of a programme of works to be funded from within the council's medium to long-term financial plan. This will create certainty for taking works forward to the next level of detail, preparation of tender

documentation and scheduling of works. This has been included in the 2019/20 draft budget and approval will take place at Full Council on 26th February.

- 1.4.3 Approaches to various external funding agencies to discuss potential bids to help fund the capital programme.
- 1.4.4 Reviews of the use, management and interpretation of heritage assets, if appropriate, and in conjunction with the requirements of external funding bids.
- 1.5 The progress that is being made with individual sites is summarised in Appendix 2, together with a summary of their heritage significance.

2. External Funding Opportunities

- 2.1 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is due to begin a new, five-year Strategic Funding Framework and as a result a number of their larger programmes are on hold until that is confirmed early in 2019. It is understood that this will be a simpler and more flexible funding programme, with a single open programme for all types of heritage project, offering grants up to £5 million.
- 2.2 Competition for grants is expected to be high and there will be a new Expression of Interest stage for larger grants (> £250,000).
- 2.3 HLF strongly encourage applications for projects that will engage a wider range of people with heritage. This presents opportunities to involve the local community in the preparation of bids, to enhance interpretation and visitor management and review the use and operation of an asset that is being put forward for funding.
- 2.4 Discussions are to be arranged with HLF as soon as the new Framework is known so that Gravesham's priorities can be discussed. HLF projects can take time to progress, with the process taking at least 18 months from application to approval of funding and this will influence the programming and timing of works.
- 2.5 Other funding programmes in respect of culture or coastal communities will also be explored, but these will have specific criteria not directly related to heritage, such as requirements to meet job and business outputs.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 3.1 Background papers are identified in Appendix 2 to this report.

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

Legal	There are no direct legal implications arising save for the need to continue to regularly assess and maintain the properties, statutes, etc. to safeguard the health and safety of employees, tenants and the public using these sites. Failure to do so could expose the council to financial (in terms of damages) and reputational risks.		
Finance and Value for Money	<p>A co-ordinated programme of works to the council’s heritage assets will be funded from the asset enhancement reserve within the council’s medium to longer term capital programme. Opportunities for external funding will be applied for wherever possible.</p> <p>This work is needed to ensure that the heritage assets are put into a good state of repair, which will strengthen the case for external funding and help to reduce the need and cost of reactive repairs and maintenance. It will influence a review of the use, operation/management and visitor interpretation of these assets, leading to greater social and economic benefit to the Borough.</p>		
Risk Assessment	Without a medium to longer term capital funding programme, the council may not be able to meet its responsibilities in respect of the care its heritage assets.		
Equality Impact Assessment	Screening for Equality Impacts		
	Question	Answer	Explanation
	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	
	c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		
<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>			
Corporate	Corporate Plan - Strategic Objective 2 – Stronger Gravesham “Promote		

Business Plan	Gravesham's cultural and heritage offer, through initiatives such as helping to raise funds to bring back a museum in Gravesend."
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications, although it should be noted that a couple of the heritage sites, e.g. Gravesend Cemetery and New Tavern Fort, have places where drug taking and dealing take place. Actions have been taken in conjunction with Kent Police to report, disrupt and address this activity.
Digital and website implications	No direct implications at this stage.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	No direct implications.