

CABINET

**COUNCILLOR MARTIN TENNANT
MAJOR PROJECTS AND PROPERTY
PORTFOLIO HOLDER
REPORT NO. RP1923**

12 NOVEMBER 2019

KEY DECISION? NO

ALDERSHOT RAILWAY STATION

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report seeks authority to enter into the grant funding agreement with the Enterprise M3 LEP for the purposes of delivering the Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds project. The report also seeks subsequent approvals associated with relocating existing public art to facilitate the project and introducing new public art on the railway station forecourt.

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1) Delegates authority to the Corporate Legal Manager in consultation with the Executive Head of Finance and Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder to enter into the grant funding agreement with the Enterprise M3 LEP for the Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds project
- 2) Authorises the Executive Head of Regeneration and Property to apply for planning permission associated with the relocation of the field gun currently located at the entrance to the railway station, and to secure other associated permissions;
- 2) Authorises officers to work with Aldershot Civic Society to develop a process for commissioning new public art on the railway station forecourt;
- 4) Notes the underspend likely on the RBC contribution to the Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds project and approves the repurpose of up to £75,000 of the agreed capital budget to fund new public art on the railway station forecourt.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to firstly seek authority enter into the grant funding agreement with the Enterprise M3 LEP for the Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds project and to subsequently seek authority relating to two proposals for the public realm arising from project works.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Aldershot station is an important gateway to the town. The forecourt and station approach currently experiences issues with traffic congestion and traffic movement conflicts. It does not, at present, provide a welcoming environment for residents or visitors.
- 2.2 To address this, Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Rushmoor Borough Council (RBC), in partnership have prepared a scheme for improving the quality of routes to and from the station for pedestrians, cyclists and cars and improvements to the station environment that facilitate a new public transport interchange for bus and taxi movements and will free up the existing bus station for redevelopment. The scope of this works is referred to as the Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds project and was the subject of a successful Business Case proposal to the Enterprise M3 LEP for grant funding. At the time of the Business Case being agreed in 2016, the funding contribution from the LEP was £900,000 and was match funded by RBC (£620,000), HCC (£180,000) and South West Trains (£100,000).
- 2.3 The delivery of the project has experienced delays, primarily associated with the anticipated costs to provide decked car parking on site escalating beyond the project budget. Delivery timescales were also impacted by a franchise change that saw South West Trains replaced by South Western Railway.
- 2.4 In the interim period, Officers have engaged on revisions to the scope of the project and have been able to agree a revised scope that achieves the intended outcomes of the original Business Case proposal but removes the need for the provision of the decked car park.
- 2.5 This links to the Rushmoor Council Business Plan theme of “Place” and contributes to its work in improving Aldershot town centre.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

Grant Funding Agreement

- 3.1 Having agreed the revised scope of the project works, the Council is required to formally enter into the grant funding agreement with the Enterprise M3 LEP. The revised project costs have been estimated at approximately £600,000 with the breakdown of contribution as follows:
 - Rushmoor Borough Council: £100,000
 - Hampshire County Council: £300,000
 - Enterprise M3 LEP grant funding: £200,000
- 3.2 It has been agreed that a clause is introduced in the funding agreement that takes into account the fact that costings will be finalised in January 2020. In the event that the costs increase significantly above the £200,000

grant allocation, the parties can look to vary the amounts through agreement.

Public Art

- 3.3 The revised scope of works for the Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds project represent an opportunity to significantly improve the public realm. The station is an important gateway to the town and to help provide a welcoming environment for those arriving or departing by train, it is proposed the Council commissions a piece of public art to communicate the essence of Aldershot and/or its aspirations for the future.
- 3.4 It is estimated that a budget of up to £75,000 will be required for a piece of art that will have impact. At present, there is no capital budget in the capital programme identified to deliver this project. As set out above, the existing capital budget for RBC's contribution to the LEP project of £620,000 is expected to be underspent. It is proposed that, noting the potential underspend, a budget of up to £75,000 is repurposed to commission an item of public art for Aldershot Station forecourt.
- 3.5 An outline brief has been prepared but this needs further work to identify the themes the commission could reflect, for example:
- Home of the British Army
 - Victorian heritage
 - Digital / technology economy in the town
 - Nepali culture
- 3.6 The Aldershot Civic Society have been facilitating the development of a town centre vision and it is suggested that the Council work with representatives of Aldershot Civic Society to develop and take forward a process for procuring the public art.
- 3.7 A maintenance plan will be needed and a revenue budget to provide for ongoing maintenance costs. It is important that the installation can be easily and cost effectively maintained: this will be a measure against which proposals will be assessed.

Field Gun

- 3.8 The field gun, that currently sits on the approach to Aldershot railway station is an example of the major British field gun of the second world war which remained the British army's primary field gun until the 1960s. This particular gun was acquired by the Council and sited at the station to represent the town's military history.
- 3.9 As part of the Station project, the junction of Station Road and Windsor Way will be altered and the roundabout on which the field gun is located

removed. A new location for the gun is required, as it is difficult to relocate with in the proposed scheme.

- 3.10 Preliminary discussions have been held with the Heritage Projects Officer of Friends of Aldershot Military Museum with a view to finding a new location for the gun to integrate with the Aldershot heritage trails. The preferred location is at the junction of Wellington Avenue and Gun Hill. This site is owned by Hampshire County Council.
- 3.11 Planning permission will be required, and authority is sought to permit the Executive Head of Regeneration and Property to make a planning application to facilitate the relocation of the field gun. Planning costs and the costs associated with relocation of the gun; construction of a plinth; and preparation of a plaque, can be contained within the RBC capital budget for the station forecourt works.
- 3.12 There will be revenue costs attached to the on-going maintenance of the gun, but officers will explore whether there are other organisations that might be prepared to take on ownership and maintenance responsibilities.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

- 4.1 The risks attached to the proposal for public art are principally reputational. Unfavourable public response to the art could reflect on the Council. This could be mitigated by sufficient public consultation and engagement in the selection of the final art or sculpture.
- 4.2 The removal of the gun from its current prominent location could be of concern to local people. The gun must be moved from its current site as a consequence of the proposed forecourt works and a more appropriate, accessible site that links with the heritage trails will tell a more coherent story of Aldershot's military history. This has been discussed with Hampshire County Council and Friends of the Aldershot Military Museum.

Legal Implications

- 4.3 The new location for the gun may not be in RBC ownership. Permission will be required from landowners, which has been discussed.
- 4.4 The station forecourt is not in the Council's ownership; therefore, the consent of Network Rail will be required for the siting of the artwork.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.5 Proposals for the gun can be accommodated within the existing capital budget for the station forecourt works.

- 4.6 A capital budget of up to £75,000 is required to cover the cost of commissioning public art, although it should be noted that the capital budget for Rushmoor Borough Council's contribution to the forecourt works is likely to be underspent and this would represent a repurposing of the current budget given that it contributes to the outcomes sought by way of public realm improvements.
- 4.7 Both proposals generate a requirement for a small revenue budget, but officers will explore the possibility of transferring responsibility for ongoing maintenance.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.8 The choice of the subject for the artwork will be sensitive to equality and diversity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Aldershot station forecourt improvements are a real opportunity create a more welcoming environment for people travelling to and from Aldershot. Entering into the grant funding agreement will enable the Council to facilitate this aspiration.
- 5.2 This would be further enhanced if visitors are greeted by public art that positively represents Aldershot.
- 5.3 Siting the field gun in a location that links with the town's heritage trails will explain its background and connect it with Aldershot's military history.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Rushmoor Borough Council Business Plan (April 2019 – March 2022)

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