

CABINET MEMBER DECISION RECORD TEMPLATE

This form should be used to record Executive decisions taken by Cabinet Members

Decision Ref. No:
Responsible Officer: Kelly Ansell, Head of Housing & Community Enforcement
Subject: Churchill Gardens Small Grants Fund
Decision taken: To implement a Small Works Grant programme using £395,000 of capital funding allocated from Private Sector Renewal Grant.
Reasons for the decision: To complete architectural works to the front exteriors of the properties in Churchill Gardens, in-line with Conservation Team approval, which will make a tangible improvement to the appearance of the area and re-instate conservation and heritage features.
Call-in and Urgency: Subject to call-in
Background: Churchill Gardens was designated a conservation area in 1993. A renewed <u>Conservation Area Appraisal</u> was published in December 2013 and more recently in January 2016 an <u>Conservation Area Management Plan</u> was adopted by the Council. The Churchill Gardens Management Plan aims to provide clarity on the future management of this historic area and address the issues previously identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal. It supports the Council's priorities for Building a Better Bournemouth - An Improving Environment, A Thriving Economy and An Active Community. Through environmental enhancements, the social/community and economic regeneration of the area is supported and delivered. The Management Plan was prepared in support of the work of the Boscombe Regeneration Partnership and potential future funding bids. They are part of the holistic and partnership working approach that is being taken towards the social, economic and environmental issues identified in the wider Boscombe area – including provision of good quality housing. The Management Plan clarifies what the priorities are for further external improvements to properties, to be undertaken primarily by the private sector. The Plan refers to the £395,000 available from the Council's Strategic Housing capital pot, stating that the aim of using the money available will be "to achieve the greatest positive visual impact on the area for least cost".

Churchill Gardens is identified as a priority area for the Boscombe Regeneration Partnership, as the issues here are a microcosm for the wider issues in the Boscombe area.

An extremely high proportion of the properties (93%) are privately rented and landlords are not inclined to invest money on the outward appearance of their property unless it is essential maintenance work. Although some properties have been maintained the majority have not and as a result there is a resonance of disrepair and neglect throughout the area. Where this work has been carried out in the past, materials not in keeping with the architecture of the area have been used adding to the feeling of neglect.

Upon the adoption of the Churchill Gardens Management Plan in January 2016, the Council has allocated £395,000 private sector renewal grant to support delivery of the plan.

Project Description

Over time individual owners and freeholders of the properties in Churchill Gardens have made 'improvements' to the external features of their houses. One of the most obvious changes across the whole of the area is the removal of the original boundary walls which have been replaced by a mixture of styles, often not in keeping with the area and generally completed to a poor standard. See supporting evidence attached for photographs of some of the existing walls.

The visual impact of these different styles has resulted in a loss of architectural cohesion in the area and it is proposed that the small works grant programme would initially offer grants to owners of the properties where walls have been replaced or are in need of significant repair. The impact of a large proportion of the boundary walls being rebuilt in the original style would improve the aesthetics of the area considerably and this is reinforced in the Council's adopted Conservation Area Management Plan.

The proposal is to offer a grant package to all owners in the defined Churchill Gardens Conservation Area who have boundary walls that the Council's Conservation Team has assessed as not in keeping with the area. The grant package would include;

- Removal of the existing boundary wall
- Building of new wall using bricks and bond approved by the Conservation Team
- Provision and fitting of a gate as approved by the Conservation Team
- Making good the ground either side of the wall

The offer of a grant package will be available to all owners of property in Churchill Gardens. To mitigate concerns that some large portfolio holders of properties in the area would benefit substantially from the grant, negotiations are taking place regarding match funding from the property owners to complete additional external works, such as replacement of front doors and general improvements to the facades of properties, thereby extending the value of the scheme.

It is anticipated that the cost of reinstatement of boundary walls for 71 properties identified as requiring attention would be approximately £144,272 (see supporting evidence attached for costing of individual wall). This will therefore be the first phase of an improvement programme, which will move on to fund works to improve front pathways and gardens; front doors, balconies etc.

Works will be carried out by the Council's in-house building team as this would ensure consistency in approach and a high standard of workmanship. This will also enable the additional benefit of local trade's people to be employed for the purposes of the scheme. To enable owners to choose their own building contractor will incur additional time and therefore

the Council's in-house building team we are able to ensure that the works are completed to a high standard and in-line with the Conservation Area Management Plan.

Reasons for rejection:

Option 1 is not appropriate

The regeneration of Boscombe and in particular Churchill Gardens is a priority for the Council and the partners within the Boscombe Regeneration Partnership. Churchill Gardens is also a priority in the Homes for Boscombe Strategy for 2012 – 2015. Without this funding allocation and the small works grant scheme proposed, the area will continue to decline and conservation benefits not realised.

It is therefore proposed that Option 2 should be considered.

Consultations undertaken:

As part of the Conservation Area Management Plan landlords and owners were consulted on the prospect of a small grants fund for external works. A consultation event took place in August 2015 and this confirmed that owners would be interested in a Small Works Grants Fund for improvements to external features such as boundary walls, gates and other architectural features.

The Council's Procurement Team were consulted in respect to whether a tender was required for the building works associated with the Small Works Grant Programme, please see further details with regard to this in the section below.

Discussions and consultation have taken place with the Legal Team regarding the legal implications of offering a grant to landlords and the processes required to administer the programme. It was agreed that as a result of the volume of work required for the Legal Team to ensure that due process is followed the scheme should fund a part time officer for a period of two years to administer the programme.

Financial Services have also been consulted in respect of this scheme with regard to the use of funds and recruitment of staff.

Finance/Resource Implications:

Following a meeting with the Procurement Team it was agreed that the Council has the resource to deliver the project in house. The decision has therefore been made to use the resource in house for the following reasons;

- to save time involved in going out to tender
- to raise the profile of the Council's in-house building team
- to ensure build quality is high and in keeping with the conservation area

Resource implications for the Legal Team have been addressed by financially supporting a part-time post for a period of two years.

Name: *Shaun Darcy*
Date: *23/02/17*

Signature: *S Darcy*

Legal implications:

- The Council has power to make the grants under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence).

costs as work would need to be inspected to ensure it was completed to a good standard using materials and building style conducive to the Conservation Area. In addition, by using one contractor, the works can be co-ordinated to minimise disruption to local residents.

Grants will be offered on a basis that they will not be repayable unless a property is sold within a five-year period of works being completed or if there is any breach of the grant agreement within a five-year period of works being completed. This will be enforceable pursuant to the terms of a legal charge to be secured against the property between the property owner(s) and the Council.

To enable the Small Works Grants Fund to be implemented it will be necessary to recruit two part-time officers to facilitate the programme.

One officer will be based in the Council's Building Team and will be responsible for administering the fund, liaising between owners and the Council's Building Team and to ensure works are completed to the standard required by the Council's Conservation Team. They will also work closely with the second part-time officer who will be located in the Council's Legal Team. This officer will be responsible for the legal administrations related to the programme.

The cost of these posts will be capitalised from within the £395,000 allocation.

Options - and reasons for rejection:

Option 1 – Do nothing.

Currently any work carried out on the exterior of the properties in Churchill Gardens is at the discretion of the owners of the properties. Although some properties have been maintained the majority have not and as a result there is a resonance of disrepair and neglect throughout the area.

An extremely high proportion of the properties (93%) are privately rented and landlords are not inclined to invest money on the outward appearance of their property unless it is essential maintenance work. Where this work has been carried out in the past, materials not in keeping with the architecture of the area have been used adding to the feeling of neglect of the area.

Option 2 – Implement Small Works Grant Scheme

The scheme would offer grants to all property owners/freeholders to improve one specific element of all of their properties. This would have more visual impact to the whole area and provide a cohesion to the properties which has been reduced over the years.

Improvements to the exterior of properties in Churchill Gardens will increase their value. We anticipate that this will encourage further investment by owners to their properties. With these improvements resident's perceptions of the area will change and people will choose to remain in Churchill Gardens, reducing the transient nature of the population.

With improvements to the area it is hoped that families will move into Churchill Gardens and surrounding area.

Those owners and landlords spoken to during the Conservation Area Management Plan consultation favoured the small works grant scheme approach.

As the funds have already been allocated to improve the visual appearance to properties in Churchill Gardens the project can be initiated quickly. With the works being completed by

- The purpose of the grants is to carry out external improvement work to residential properties in Churchill Gardens, Boscombe in order to improve the appearance of the area.
- Grants will be offered on a basis that they will not be repayable unless a property is sold within a five-year period of works being completed or if there is any breach of the grant agreement within a five-year period of works being completed. This will be enforceable pursuant to the terms of a legal charge to be secured against the property between the property owner(s) and the Council.
- In order to undertake works, the grant will need to be agreed with such persons as have a relevant interest in the property. This may include tenants under long leases and mortgage companies, for example.
- A property may also be subject to covenants that restrict works from being carried out. Consent from whoever has the benefit of such covenants will be required.
- Legal Services will be instructed to ascertain legal ownership of the relevant properties and obtain any required consents. Legal Services will also be instructed to register the charge against the property.
- Where such matters are not resolved, the grant funding and corresponding works may be prevented from being undertaken.
- From a technical perspective, works may need particular planning permission in some instances and the Council's Building Team will ensure all necessary consents are sought and obtained.

Name: Tanya Coulter

Signature:

Date: 22/2/17

Please note that we will be unable to publish the Cabinet Member Decision without the Risk assessment and Impact assessment as they are a legal requirement.

Risk assessment:

A number of potential minor risks have been identified but these are primarily impacting the ability of the project to meet its aims. The biggest risk is a lack of interest in the scheme by owners and landlords and therefore a reduction in the impact of the project to improve the appearance of the area.

Name: Kelly Ansell

Signature:

Date: 28/2/17

Impact Assessments:

The SIA impact checklist has been completed and predicts limited impacts. Primarily any impacts will be positive as improvements to the external features of Churchill Gardens will improve the street scene, improve the quality of existing space and educating residents and landlords on the history of the conservation area.

Summary of equalities and diversity impact

The Equality Impact Assessment Screening tool indicates that there are no specific equality groups that will be directly affected by the proposed scheme. Although there are positive impacts these would not indicate the need for an EINA to be completed.

Information for/not for publication:

For publication

Background papers:

Conservation Area Appraisal
Area Management Plan

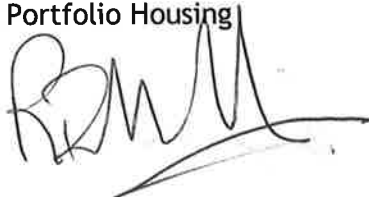
Any conflict of interest declared by a Cabinet Member who is consulted by the Member taking the decision	Name of Cabinet Member	Nature of interest	Details of any dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer
Yes/No* (*Delete as appropriate)			

Decision taken by:

Councillor Robert Lawton

Cabinet Portfolio Housing

Signed:



Date of decision:

1-3-17

Date of publication of record of decision: (to be inserted by Democratic Services)

Date decision effective - that is 5 working days after the date of publication of the record of decision unless the decision is called-in for consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

-insert
date-

Note - See separate guidance on recording decisions at Appendix 1.