

Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Chief Executive (Introduced by the Executive Member (Resources))	Executive Cabinet	Thursday 12 November 2020

UPDATE ON AND CONTRACT AWARD FOR ASTLEY HALL CONSERVATION WORK

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update members on progress with the conservation work at Astley Hall and seek approval for delegated powers to award the contract for the main works.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. To note progress on the project and timescale for completion.
3. To ratify the procurement approach that was approved by executive member decision in Appendix E and F.
4. To delegate powers to award the contract for the main works to the Executive Member for Resources based on the competitive tender process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

5. The council has committed to undertaking significant conservation works to preserve Astley Hall for the enjoyment of future generations. This report outlines progress made to date in securing listed building consent and carrying out preparations for the main works. It also sets out details for the contract award following a competitive tender process.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Key Decision? Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Reason Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
	3, a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more	4, Significant impact in environmental, social or physical terms in two or more wards

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

- 6. To ensure members are fully informed of progress on this project and ensure a decision is taken on the contract award in line with our formal procedures.
- 7. The decision on how the tender would be undertaken was taken by Executive Member Decision due to the amended timescales and to get the project back on track. The process needs to be ratified by Executive Cabinet in order to allow delegated powers for the contract award once the tenders have been returned and reviewed.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 8. No alternative options have been considered as the contract award requires ratification from Executive Cabinet to delegate the decision to the executive member to keep the project on track. The decision to undertake the work has already been agreed as part of the corporate strategy.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 9. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	x	A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	

BACKGROUND

- 10. Astley Hall is a Grade I listed building situated in the beautiful grounds of Astley Park. It is a popular visitor destination and significant heritage asset for the borough having been built circa 16th century and has been under the ownership of the council for almost 100 years.
- 11. Like most historic buildings the Hall requires significant work to conserve it for future generations and we are at that point in time, roughly every 70 years, when major work needs to be done to maintain the building.
- 12. The most significant area needing attention is the front of the building where the render has been failing for some time and the window frames are in a poor state of repair.
- 13. The council has been planning this work for a number of years and had submitted two Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bids to secure funding for the repairs but was unsuccessful on both occasions.
- 14. In 2019 the council agreed to fund the work itself given the huge importance to the local area and work has been continuing since then to put plans in place for the improvements.
- 15. The process has been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and having secured Listed Building Consent in October work is planned to start on site by the New Year with a completion date in the summer.

WORKS TO ASTLEY HALL

- 16. The work to the Hall is split into three main sections:

- a. Removal of the render on the front of the Hall and replacement of the windows and window frames: The view is that following the removal of the render the preference is to return the Hall to its original brick frontage. This can only be determined once the render has been removed and we know what state the brick is beneath the surface. The window frames will be replaced with a solid oak frame and painted in a colour to match the historical context of the building. You can view some images of how the Hall could look at Appendix A. The colour being used to paint the test window based on the historical assessment is at Appendix B.
- b. Improving the visitor route: this will include a new side entrance to the Hall and reconfiguration of how people circulate in the building. This is to enhance the experience so that visitors don't enter via the grandest room, which is currently the case in the Great Hall, and to tie in with our plans for a museum shop and futureproof it should we look to introduce a visitor fee in the future. It has also given consideration to a new internal staircase to reduce the amount of usage on the main staircase, which is in need of some attention. Due to the practicalities of this we will reinforce the main staircase rather than look to create a new staircase.
- c. Repairs to the cottage roof: while not part of the scope of this original project the cottage roof at the rear of the Hall where the staff offices are based is in need of repair and this work will be carried out as part of this project but funded separately from the council's general maintenance budget.

CREATION OF A MUSEUM SHOP

17. As part of the work we are going to create a museum shop and information centre. At many other visitor attractions like this a museum shop is something people would expect and allows for us to generate income to make the site more sustainable.
18. It creates a point of contact for visitors to the site, which currently doesn't exist outside of the Hall opening hours, and will act as an introduction to people wanting to visit the Hall.
19. The shop is currently under construction in the downstairs activity space in the Coach House with an anticipated opening date in December. Impressions of how this will look can be seen at Appendix C.
20. It will contain merchandise featuring Lancashire produce, high end gifts and pocket money items but also have an introductory exhibition to the Hall with people able to exit the shop via the side door of the Coach House that would naturally lead people to the new entrance on the western side of Astley Hall.
21. The area will also act as a point of information meaning we can signpost people to other visitor attractions in the borough and will enable us to strengthen the link between Astley Hall and the town centre.

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO ASTLEY PARK

22. While not part of this project it is an opportunity to inform members on other work that has taken place or is due to take place in the coming months.
23. Additional car parking spaces have been created with the extension to Hallgate car park, the opening of the new car park at the Southport Road entrance and early next year will see the opening of the Westway sports facility, which will have overflow car parking for events. This will result in a total overall gain of 210 spaces for visitors.

24. The footpath around the perimeter of the playing fields has been repaired thanks to external funding secured by the Friends of Astley Park. They are also able to create a signposted trail through the park with this funding that will take people on a route through the woods so visitors who aren't familiar with the area can enjoy a guided route.
25. Work has also been undertaken to develop a lighting scheme for the main footpath through the park from the Park Road entrance through to the Hall.
26. There is funding set aside for the renovation of Ackhurst Lodge and the creation of a new attraction – this replaces the proposed new adventure golf area, which was shelved following the inclusion of a similar facility within the Market Walk shopping centre.

TIMESCALES

27. The main work to the Hall was due to start on site earlier this year but due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic this has been reviewed and a new programme has been agreed. The key milestones for the project are:
 - a. Determination of the Listed Building Consent – secured in October 2020
 - b. Tender for the works and award the contract – November/December 2020
 - c. Undertake preparation work on site, which includes preparing the Hall by ensuring all the furniture and items are protected internally – October – December 2020
 - d. Work starts on site – January 2021
 - e. Work completed and site ready for re-opening – July 2021
28. A full project plan is included at Appendix D and is subject to change due to the nature of the work and the uncertainty of what will be revealed once the render is removed. We also have to be mindful of the ongoing impacts on the pandemic and the lead in times for elements such as the window frames, which could impact on the programme.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

29. The work carries a number of risks mainly due to the age and nature of the building. We may come across problems that we are not aware of until the render is removed and any repairs will need to be agreed in line with the Listed Building Consent.
30. We also have to be mindful of the pandemic, which may impact on working arrangements, and the effect this could have on the lead in time for things like the contractor mobilisation and manufacture of the windows and window frames.
31. The above risks may impact on the programme and the costs for the work. The results of the tender process that are included within this report indicate that we will be able to manage the work within budget.
32. A full breakdown of risks and how we will manage these is included within the project documentation.
33. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	x	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	x	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this		Policy and Communications	

area			
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COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

34. The capital programme includes a budget of £1.646m for the various works outlined in this report. In addition, there is currently £50k set aside in the asset improvement budget for works to the cottage roof.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

35. Members will note the comment on the Executive Member Decision concerning the procedure used for approving the procurement process and it will not be repeated here. The value of the works dictate that Cabinet should approve the procurement prior to the contract award and although not strictly in compliance with the council’s contract procedure rules the contract will not be awarded without approval of the process by Cabinet which is the purpose of the process.

CHRIS SINNOTT
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Report Author	Ext	Date
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