

Subject:	Valley Gardens		
Date of Meeting:	17th March 2015		
Report of:	Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report updates Committee on Valley Gardens Phase 1&2 progress since October 2014 and seeks approvals required to progress the project towards implementation in 2015/16.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Committee notes progress since October 2014.
- 2.2 That Committee agrees the next project stage (Landscape and Highways Technical Design) should commence under guidance of the Project Management Board.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Context**

- 3.1 The council's aspiration to enhance Valley Gardens is outlined in the 2006 Local Transport Plan. Since 2011, work on the project has been ongoing, and in February 2015 the council was successful in securing an £8m contribution to deliver Phase 1&2 of the project (between Edward Street and St Peters Place / Ditchling Road) from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- 3.2 The most recent Committee decisions relating specifically to Valley Gardens were made by October 2014 ETS Committee, which agreed an amended layout for the Phase 1&2 scheme, that an additional Business Case should be prepared to access LEP funding for Phase 3 of Valley Gardens (Edward St to the seafront) and that a Member Project Board (the Project Management Board) should be established to act as a reference group and advisory body for the scheme. (A full summary of decision-making context is contained in Appendix 1: Valley Gardens Process and Decision Making Summary).

- 3.3 This report updates Committee on progress since October and seeks approvals that will enable the Phase 1&2 project to be progressed towards physical implementation.

General Update

- 3.4 Since October, further workshops have been held with the community and stakeholders to help refine a final proposal for Valley Gardens Phases 1&2. A summary of the final proposal is attached as Appendix 2: Developed Design Visuals.
- 3.5 The Project Management Board has met 4 times. Meeting notes have been circulated to all members of ETS Committee.
- 3.6 A planning application has been submitted for Valley Gardens Phase 1&2, although at the time of writing, consultation and decision timeframes relating to that Planning Application are to be confirmed.
- 3.7 In February 2015 The Local Enterprise Partnership agreed that the Valley Gardens Business Case was very strong, and confirmed that funding to implement the scheme was available from the start of 2015/16. The LEP have asked that funding be provided over three years rather than two as previously assumed. (On 16th February ETS Urgency Sub Committee agreed that the council should accept the LEP's funding offer).
- 3.8 Procurement for consultant support to deliver the next stage of project development (Technical Design) has been completed.
- 3.9 A separate report will be taken to Policy & Resources on 19th March 2015 seeking formal approval of 2015/16 Local Transport Plan allocations.

Progressing the Project

- 3.10 A design team is now in place to progress the next stage of the project (Technical Design). In simple terms, this stage progresses the "Developed Design" scheme layout to a buildable stage by establishing detail of construction depths, signage arrangements and drainage etc. The stage also involves procurement of contractors to commence physical works, development of a works phasing plan, further refinement of anticipated scheme costs and completion of a strategy for managing ongoing maintenance of the new scheme.
- 3.11 It should be noted that alongside ETS Committee approval to commence the Technical Design stage, two additional Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee approvals are required to enable completion of this project stage. A decision on whether LTP funding should be allocated to progress the work outlined in this report will be made at P&R Committee on March 19th 2015, as part of the wider LTP funding decision making process. Due to the value of works contracts, approval from Policy & Resources Committee to procure contractors to build the Valley Gardens Phase 1&2 scheme also needs to be secured, and will be sought in June 2015.

- 3.12 When contractors are in place and a work schedule, final costings and ongoing maintenance strategy have been prepared, ETS Committee will be asked for approval to start the next project stage, Construction.
- 3.13 A project timeline, summarising different project stages, is attached as Appendix 3.
- 3.14 For clarification, since October 2014 no further work has been undertaken to progress Valley Gardens Phase 3 (Edward Street to the seafront). It is anticipated that work to develop the Business case for this area will commence next financial year.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Committee could decide not to progress the project, either now or ahead of commencing the implementation work stage. In either instance, funding would be returned to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 4.2 Such a decision would have resulted in a degree of abortive council investment in the project (more if the project is stopped at the Implementation rather than Technical Design stage), would make delivery of the agreed Valley Gardens proposals unlikely in the foreseeable future and could also impact on decisions relating to potential funding allocations for other city schemes through the LEP funding channel.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Community, in its broadest sense, has been consulted throughout the process. Since October, communication processes have included community representation on the Project Management Board, community workshops in November and December to inform development of the final scheme design, audience mapping and development of a communication strategy in partnership with local company Neo, development of a programme to engage young people in the decision making process in partnership with the University of Brighton, the first stages of developing a Valley Gardens Community Group, sharing of information relating to the final design through a range of media including public displays in Valley Gardens, and a formal consultation process through the Valley Gardens planning process.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Since 2011 Transport and then ETS Committee has overseen a process which has developed from approval of a community led brief through development of a concept scheme to identification and attainment of significant funding to enable physical improvements to be delivered in Valley Gardens.
- 6.2 The recommendations in this report enable the project to proceed towards physical implementation.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The total capital cost of the (Phase 1&2) scheme is estimated at £10.006m. Of this £0.370m has already been funded from existing allocations for Valley Gardens within the Local Transport Plan budgets for 2013/14 and 2014/15. This leaves £9.636m planned to be spent between 2015/16 and 2017/18 . It is expected that £8.000m will be funded from the Local Growth Fund and £1.636m will be provided from local resources as matched funding. This matched funding element consists of £1.345m from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) allocations and £0.291m from Section 106 contributions and other sources.
- 7.2 If funding is agreed by the LEP and the scheme goes ahead then the project will need Policy & Resources Committee approval to be added to the capital programme.
- 7.3 It is possible that the enhanced public space will result in increased maintenance liabilities. If this is the case the cross-sector Management Group will need to be tasked with identifying ways of containing these within existing budgets.
- 7.4 The costs of the Project Management Board will be from within existing revenue budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford Date: 06/02/15

Legal Implications:

- 7.5 There are no legal implications arising from this report

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 02/02/15

Equalities Implications:

- 7.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment is planned but has yet to be completed. The overall aim of the Valley Gardens proposal is to make the movement and place functions of Valley Gardens as inclusive as possible by redressing current environmental conditions that discourage use by all groups, and is arguably especially unpleasant for older and younger people.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.7 The (Valley Gardens northern and southern) proposals improve Air Quality, Noise Quality and introduce Sustainable Urban Drainage System features that enable the area to better accommodate future flash flooding events. The proposals provide an enhanced environment for the National Elm Collection and create an Arboretum to protect that heritage into the future, whilst additional planting and reduction in severance created by current transport infrastructure will enhance the area's biodiversity. Achieving a better balance of space between different movement modes also encourages sustainable transport choice. Overall the scheme objectives support those of Biosphere, as explained further in the full Business Case previously agreed by Committee.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications: The project directly supports objectives of the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan, the City Plan, Local Transport Plan, Conservation Area and Enhancement Plan, Biosphere, Air Quality Management Area, Seafront Strategy, One Planet Living, Public Space Public Life, the London Road SPD and the LR2 Study.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Valley Gardens Process and Decision Making Summary
2. Developed Design Visuals
3. Valley Gardens Phase 1&2 Project Timeline

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis (2011)
2. Design Brief for Valley Gardens (2012)
3. Concept Scheme for Valley Gardens (2013)
4. Valley Gardens Business Case (2014)

