

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	City Growth and Resources Committee
DATE	25 August 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Beachfront Projects Feasibility Report
REPORT NUMBER	RES/21/200
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REPORT AUTHOR	Craig Innes
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.1.5, 3.2, 3.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. In May 2021, the Council's City Growth and Resources Committee agreed to instruct the Director of Resources to undertake a public survey on the future of the Beach to help formulate the development of the Beach Masterplan; and instruct the Director of Resources to report back an update on the output of the technical feasibility studies, public consultation and proposed Beach Masterplan to the City Growth and Resources Committee (CG&R) on the 25 August 2021.
- 1.2. This report is complementary to the City Centre Masterplan Review (Report Number Ref: RES/21/179).

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1. Instruct the Director of Resources to move to Full Business Case and options appraisal for the Beach Ballroom including a major refurbishment and report back on progress to the CG&R Committee on the 3rd November 2021;
- 2.2. Instruct the Director of Resources to progress detailed design for the Queens Links to incorporate landscaping, public realm, playpark and integrated water features;
- 2.3. Instruct the Director of Resources to develop Full Business Cases and options appraisal for Sports/Leisure Facilities on the Kings Links which would include full redevelopment of new facilities as well as a major refurbishment of existing facilities and report back on progress to the CG&R Committee on the 3rd November 2021;
- 2.4. Instruct the Director of Resources to develop Full Business Cases and options appraisal for Broadhill and report back on progress to the CG&R Committee on the 3rd November 2021;
- 2.5. Instruct the Director of Resources to initiate a formal pre-application consultation for the Beachfront activities (Beach Ballroom, Sports/Leisure

- facilities, public realm/beach landscaping) and/or subsequent planning applications thereafter;
- 2.6. Instruct the Director of Resources to Develop and implement measures along the promenade and surrounding areas as per paragraph 3.8.6 of the report;
 - 2.7. Instruct the Director of Resources to move to a Full Business Case and options appraisal for the Beach Boulevard with connectivity to the City Centre through the Castlegate thereby anchoring a closer link between the city centre and the beach and report back on progress to the CG&R Committee on the 3rd November 2021; and
 - 2.8. Instruct the Director of Resources to prepare an options appraisal for the provision of an Energy Centre as described within section 3.21 of the report and report back on progress to the CG&R Committee on the 3rd November 2021.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council has made a commitment to update the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (2015) (CCMP) to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on the city and respond to the November 2020 report by the Economic Policy Panel and other recent key strategic commitments. These strategies focus on the desire to develop a holistic Aberdeen City Vision to support economic recovery and growth (post Covid) and to support the continuing diversification within the energy sector towards net zero, and maximising the competitive advantage the city region has in offshore/ subsea engineering and energy production.
- 3.2 Investment in skills, health and wellbeing and quality of life through the utilisation of “place based” strategies will also support the development of “Aberdeen the place” – a vibrant city where people choose to live, work, do business and invest.
- 3.3 Masterplans that cover such an ambitious scope and with long-term programmes are by necessity dynamic, responding to evolution of demand, priorities, market conditions and trends. This has been particularly evident during 2020/21 with changes to how people interact and use the City Centre and surrounding areas during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.4 It is recognised that there a number of key objectives by which the successful development of the Aberdeen City Vision will be evaluated. These include:
 - i. Better outcomes for people and communities
 - ii. Healthier communities and improved wellbeing
 - iii. Maximising financial benefit and return on investment
 - iv. Retaining money invested in the territory and the region
 - v. High quality jobs and benefits realisation
 - vi. Resilient recovery from Covid-19

- vii. Sustainable delivery of public services
- viii. Increased educational attainment, skills and life-long learning and
- ix. Holistic planning between economic and social infrastructure

3.5 Review of Existing Information

3.5.1 An Engineering Site Appraisal for the Beachfront development area has been undertaken. This is attached in **Appendix A** and includes a desk-top study of the site along with recommendations for further survey activity considered necessary as development of the project progresses.

3.5.2 During development of this feasibility study there has been engagement with the Council's Coastal Defence/Flooding team. We understand that proposed works to maintain/ improve current coastal defences do not impact on the area associated with this study. However the current coastal defences do protect the proposed development zone and therefore assume that any necessary maintenance/ improvement works will take place as part of any Beachfront development activity.

3.5.3 Existing information has included:

- i. Landscape Assessment reports;
- ii. Historic Masterplan studies;
- iii. Beach Ballroom Conditions Survey;
- iv. GIS information.

3.5.4 While this existing information has been useful in preparing this Feasibility Report, it is clear that additional information and work packages will be required for the future design stages.

3.6 Utilities Infrastructure Overview

3.6.1 An initial utilities infrastructure review has been undertaken. From this high-level desktop study it is recommended that the following approaches be explored by the design team in more detail moving forward:

- i. Existing utilities infrastructure to be utilised as far as possible
- ii. Robustness of existing networks to be reviewed
- iii. Additional or diverse infrastructure to be added as required
- iv. Phasing of works will impact on infrastructure strategy
- v. Utilities diversions will be required due to roadway alterations

- vi. Electric Vehicle charging provision to be as ACC Guidance
- vii. Utilities Infrastructure to be developed to suit final Energy Strategy
- viii. Possible use of existing district heating network to serve larger development
- ix. Metering/distribution strategy to be developed regarding shared or linked facilities

3.7 Anticipated EIA Scope

- 3.7.1 Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the wider Masterplan proposals (and some of the stand-alone developments within the masterplan) constitute 'Schedule 2' development, and therefore there will be a requirement to undertake an 'EIA Screening' process to formally establish if an EIA will be required to support the proposals.
- 3.7.2 Only once an indicative development proposal has been agreed can the formal 'Screening' process can be undertaken. If that process subsequently establishes that an EIA will be required, then a further 'EIA Scoping' process will be undertaken to establish the detailed scope of the required EIA (following input from statutory consultees).
- 3.7.3 However, in the meantime, having considered the Masterplan options and the associated clusters of development as presented within this report, we believe that a case could be made that any future planning application(s) would not require an EIA. This is largely based on the review area not including any international or national designations, and that the largest element of built development (stadium) is effectively being relocated within the same vicinity.
- 3.7.4 It is important to stress that EIA requirements, or otherwise, need to be considered further, following any decision being reached on the Masterplan/development options.
- 3.7.5 Whether included within an EIA or as a suite of individual documents, it is anticipated that assessments/surveys relating to the topics below could be required to support any future planning application(s). This list should not be considered as exhaustive, and subject to further discussions with relevant stakeholders:
 - i. Design and Access Statement;
 - ii. Transport Assessment;
 - iii. Active Travel Plan;
 - vi. Planning Statement;
 - v. Heritage Statement;

- vi. Ecology and Protected Species Surveys;
- vii. Marine noise modelling;
- viii. Noise Impact Assessment;
- ix. Air Quality Assessment;
- x. Site Investigation/Geo-Environmental;
- xi. Flood Risk Assessment (inc Coastal Flooding);
- xii. Drainage Impact Assessment;
- xiii. Landscape/Seascape (Visual) Impact Assessment;
- xiv. Lighting Strategy.

3.7.6 In addition to the above considerations, the Council will also require to undertake the following in relation to any plan, policy or strategy being brought forward:

- i. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - assess, consult on, and monitor the likely impacts their plans, programmes and strategies will have on the environment;
- ii. Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA) - all competent authorities must consider whether any plan or project will have a 'likely significant effect' on a European site (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas);
- iii. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) - to help ensure that the Council does not discriminate and that where possible the Council utilises opportunities to promote equality, as well as all other human rights and good relations between groups.

3.8 Stakeholder Engagement

3.8.1 In order to understand current public views and reflect the changing socio-economic context since the approval of the 2015 Masterplan, a public engagement exercise entitled "The Future of Aberdeen City Centre and the Beach" was undertaken.

3.8.2 Consultation was carried out online in the form of a simulator model developed by Council officers, based on the simulator successfully employed for the Local Outcome Improvement Plan previously. Running for 3 weeks from 12 June – 02 July 2021, the simulator returned a total of **7,697** responses.

3.8.3 Of these responses, 7,610 provided demographic information and 2,753 responses included "free text" in one or more of the comments boxes provided. It has been noted by Delib, the company providing the simulator

software, that this is one of the most successful response rates achieved for this type of tool. The number of respondents far exceeds the generally accepted figure of approximately 2,000 in order to gain a representative sample and value of response.

3.8.4 The top ten issues returned were:

Top Ten Priorities
1. Union Street as the Heart of the City
2. Make outdoor café culture in the Belmont Street area permanent
3. Focus on building maintenance and upkeep for Union Street
4. Beach as location for a new stadium
5. More trees, flowers and green spaces on Union Street
6. Pedestrianised central section of Union Street (Market Street to Bridge Street)
7. Improve connections from the Beach to the City Centre
8. Remove street clutter on Union Street
9. Castlegate - make more of the space
10. Improve connections from the City Centre to the Beach

3.8.5 Table 1 below captures what was said by the public in the left hand column and the right hand column is the responses.

Table 1.

Beach	Walking route to beach is difficult and unattractive, need better walking connections to the beach from Castlegate.	Union Street East and Castlegate, together with an access and connectivity study for the Beach, are currently being developed to explore options and address this.
	Need much better bus service between city centre and the beach until later at night, bus routes treat the beach like an outpost rather than a real destination, what about an electric 'tram' or shuttle bus between Castlegate, The Beach, Union Street and Union Square, hop on/off transport from parking to the visitor attractions.	
	Links to harbour is missing (Tall Ships), boats should host more harbour or coastal tours, maybe even a boat that would be a permanent fixture on the harbour as a restaurant or for events etc.	Harbour tours are currently offered. Capacity for a permanent fixture at the harbour is currently limited due to operations but could possibly be explored once Harbour South is

		open. Requires further engagement with Aberdeen Harbour Board.
Make more of the beachfront as a long stay destination, need to encourage people to have variety of activities and spend entire day at the beach – activity centre, picnic tables, BBQ areas, public park, toilets, coordinated/more parking, evening events, outdoor concert area at the beach, trendy rooftop bars, fish and chips, bucket and spade shops, surf shop, dedicated area for overnight motorhome parking.		All of these issues are currently being reviewed and addressed as part of the Beach masterplan options appraisal and concept development design stage
Dominated by shops that offer nothing individual, layout of buildings turns away from the sea.		Agreed that the orientation of existing buildings is poor. Early concept design work seeks to address this issue in any new development.
No exciting children's park to attract visitors from further away, Montrose Beach or Arbroath park facilities are better for children (paddling pools), beach not welcoming to families, not all families have money to spend in Codonas, paddling/splash park for families, more family swim sessions, outdoor skatepark at the beach, aquarium, children adventure park, wildlife, dolphin and maritime centre.		A key component of any redesigned public park at the Beach is incorporating children's play and activities. This is included in the recommendations in the Beach report to City Growth and Resources Committee on 25 August 2021. A dolphin watch station is planned for Torry Battery.
Better facilities using the sea itself and more extreme sports activities as the city is lacking in these, sea for water sports, surfing/paddle boarding, small pier to get boat trips into harbour, more extreme sport/rock climbing facilities, boardwalk, running track, adult outdoor gyms, large proportion of seafront used for 1 group – golfers, could be much better utilised for dedicated water sports and events, people to teach about water safety.		The range of sports and leisure activities possible at the Beach is currently under review through that project workstream. All suggestions will be shared will the design team for review and potential inclusion.
Value the beauty and tranquillity of the 'wilder' end, create a dedicated dog walk park area, beach esplanade can get very crowded so more 'nice' areas for leisure would disperse this.		To be referred to Beach design team for review.
More public toilets, places for people to wash sand off and change, toilets at the Bridge of Don end of the beach.		This area is outside the current review zone, but can be referred to Operations cluster for review.
Repair and renovate steps down to the beach, new fencing, re-open the huts at the beach, well maintained access and beach ramps, regular upkeep, and warden presence to enforce littering offences, people to keep it clean, a presence that people can go to, regular beach cleaning, enhance recycling/rubbish incentives and opportunities, enforcement of no dog zones.		Access to the Beach is a key component of concept design work and will be referred to the design team. Maintenance issues to be referred to Operations cluster.
Improved seating along the beachfront, and 'glass sculpture' viewing areas that provides some relief from the North Sea wind, improved street lighting along entire length of esplanade, cats eyes along beach front path		Appropriate shelter and lighting are important to the public realm at the Beach and will be incorporated as concept design work develops –referred to the design team.

	as per riverside drive, lighting along the lower beach walkway.	
	Beach Ballroom should open a cafe on the upper floor with views out to sea, more varied events, more music event, photo exhibitions in the Beach Ballroom of Aberdeen through the years to attract visitors.	Regeneration of the Beach Ballroom is a key component of the Beach concept design work, taking advantage of both its character and setting on the coast. These issues will be referred to the design team.
	Stadium close to centre is vital, with a new stadium at the beach, use it for concerts and create spaces for exhibitions and fairs, food and drinks shows, make an area for entertainment, eating and drinking around the stadium so there is a whole family day out in addition to the match, no public money spent on football stadium, redevelopment of Pittodrie would leave beach for other public uses but still allow match day revenue to stay in the area.	The Council is developing a sports and leisure proposal for the area that may incorporate a stadium and links to a variety of additional leisure activity. Should a full business case demonstrate viability, funding sources would be identified at that stage.

3.8.6 Further initial stakeholder activity has identified key users of the existing leisure facilities associated with the Beachfront development area. An initial engagement event was hosted on 6th August 2021 to discuss Beachfront proposals and receive feedback. Discussions with Sport Aberdeen, Transition Extreme and Aberdeen Football Club as key stakeholders to the area are ongoing.

3.8.7 The main themes gathered from this engagement event included:

- the need for improved maintenance and cleanliness;
- additional lighting along the lower promenade;
- street art on the stairways and tunnels;
- sculptures;
- painting of railings;
- improve pavement surface;
- creation of a cycleway along the back of the road;
- creation of a bay for a multitude of watersports and include a pier;
- additional signage;
- signage to connect the beach and city centre;
- ideas around visitor attractions;
- upgrade on the playpark on the Queens Links;
- additional accessibility;
- clubhouse for recognised clubs and users, changing rooms, showers;
- options for relocating users of the Kings Links (cricket pitch).

3.8.8 Each of the groups/clubs engaged emphasised that the beachfront has never been more popular and busier and it is regarded as one of the best beaches in the UK for surfing.

3.9 The Vision

3.9.1 The Beachfront Masterplan offers a unique opportunity to create a transformational new waterfront destination for the City of Aberdeen. This

feasibility report captures initial concepts exploring the 'art of the possible' for the Beachfront, compiled over an intense 4 week period of collaborative design workshops, meetings and site visits during July 2021.

3.9.2 A key site within the masterplan area is the iconic Beach Ballroom. An enhanced public realm setting for the re-imagined Ballroom, integrated with a new Stadium and Leisure complex, could create a dynamic new character area which connects back into the City Centre. This people-focussed environment will be inclusive for all, creating a real community asset and bringing the 'Wow' factor back to the Beachfront.

3.10 **Project Brief**

3.10.1 During the initial feasibility stage, the beachfront Masterplan will take the form of a structural plan, similar in scope to a development control plan. This initial exercise will consider three main options linked to the three core facilities associated with the Beachfront study:

- i. Arrangement involving Ballroom/Leisure Facility/Stadium
- ii. Arrangement involving Ballroom/Stadium/Leisure Facility
- iii. Arrangement involving Ballroom/Leisure Facility

3.10.2 In developing the above options, the Design Team will be mindful of linkages and operational benefits that can flow from these potential relationships.

3.10.3 Key aspects of the Brief include:

- i. The importance of the re-imagined ballroom, including a desire to return it to its former glory when it was known as the 'People's Ballroom'. This needs to recognise the buildings heritage and historic significance whilst equipping it for the future as a modern leisure/ hospitality and events venue.
- ii. The potential to share/link facilities associated with the new stadium and leisure facilities to support joint funding and realise economies of scale.
- iii. A desire for a dynamic waterfront making the most of the beach boulevard and considering support facilities such as changing accommodation/beach huts and a pier.
- iv. Excellent, high quality public realm.
- v. Recognising the potential of land assembly exercises, including the current golf driving range and cricket club.
- vi. Reviewing the previous studies on potential leisure activities and how this could be configured within the Masterplan. This should be fully inclusive and consider catering for all income groups that may visit the beachfront.

- vii. Access and connectivity between the Beachfront and the City Centre.
- viii. Infrastructure, including traffic management that reduces the impact of the existing road network to promote alternative forms of travel, including cycling whilst improving public realm.
- ix. Co-ordination with potential flood/sea defence works planned for the area.

3.11 Planning Context

3.11.1 The principle of improving access to both formal and informal leisure and recreational offer along the City's Beachfront has been supported by national and strategic planning and associated policy for a number of years, however such support has been emboldened by strategies emerging to serve a post-Covid 19 landscape. While the Beachfront is a major tourism asset in its own right, the visitor footfall has proven to be significantly greater in recent months and is anticipated to remain in such demand as residents and visitors seek safe, outdoor and active experiences.

3.11.2 While there are no specific references to Aberdeen Beachfront and its links to the City Centre, the principle of the Beachfront Masterplan and associated proposals draws support from a number of national and strategic policies and frameworks, including the key outcomes of the emerging National Planning Policy Framework 4, including 'Resilient Communities', 'A Wellbeing Economy' and 'Better, Greener Places'. The proposals are also consistent with the Council's recently approved Socio-Economic Rescue Plan, touching on all three of the 'business', 'people' and 'place' themes, as well as aligning with emerging Healthy Cities agenda, particularly those relating to green spaces, access to parks and the natural environment and positive societal relations.

3.11.3 A high-level policy assessment of the proposal options against the Adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017) and Scottish Planning Policy (2014) has been undertaken.

- i. **Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017**

- ii. Key Policies

- Policy NC9 – Beach and Leisure:
- Policy NE1 - Green Space Network
- Policy NE3 - Urban Green Space

- iii. Policies to be considered further:

- Policy NE6 - Flooding, Drainage and Water Quality
- Policy NE8 - Natural Heritage

- Policy NE7 - Coastal Planning
 - Policy NE8 - Natural Heritage
 - Policy NE9 - Access and Informal Recreation
 - Policy D4 - Historic Environment
 - Policy I1 - Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations
 - Policy T2 - Managing the Transport Impact of Development
 - Policy T3 - Sustainable and Active Travel
 - Policy T5 – Noise
- iv. Policy NC9 – Beach and Leisure: notes that development within the defined Beach and Leisure area will be permitted provided they: a) contribute to the range and quality of the existing uses, facilities and activities of the wider beach area; b) are of an appropriate scale; c) do not have an unduly adverse effect on the character of the area, or cause negative visual or environmental impacts or affect the amenities of nearby residents; and do not result in the significant generation of car borne journeys, nor additional pressure for car parking.
 - v. The proposals are anticipated to comply with Policy NC9 as any such development will be beach and leisure-related and of appropriate scale, with impacts effectively managed through design.
 - vi. Policy NE1 - Green Space Network: notes that the Council will protect, promote and enhance the wildlife, access, recreation, ecosystem services and landscape value of the Green Space Network, which is identified on the Proposals Map. New developments should maintain and enhance the coherence of the network, and seek to identify new areas incorporating Green Space Network.
 - vii. The proposals will be designed to comply with Policy NE1, ensuring that linkages to, from and throughout the green space network are maintained and improved where possible.
 - viii. Policy NE3 - Urban Green Space: notes that Permission will not be granted to redevelop any parks, playing fields, sports pitches, or all other areas of urban green space for any use other than recreation and sport. Exceptions will be made when an equivalent and equally convenient and accessible area for public space is laid out and made available in the locality by the applicant for urban green space purposes, provided that specific criteria are met, including consistency with the terms of Scottish Planning Policy.
 - ix. The proposals are considered compliant with Policy NE3 as any Stadium or Leisure development will constitute a 'recreation and sport' use.

Notably, there is no LDP requirement to mitigate for the loss of any passive or active open or sports pitch space given the compliant use of the proposed development. However, national policy (see below) would suggest the requirement for compensation or re-provision.

- x. Policy NE7 – Coastal Planning also resists development within areas that may be subject to coastal erosion or flooding. While the Beachfront masterplan review area is not notably susceptible to coastal flooding, it is noted that the Council are bringing forward coastal defence measures within the wider beach area. It is recommended that such coastal defence measures are assimilated into the wider Masterplan proposals to present a holistic and complimentary design solution to all activities.

3.12 Scottish Planning Policy (2014)

3.12.1 Scottish Planning Policy paragraph 226 will be relevant to forthcoming planning applications at Kings Links, specifically in relation to the potential removal or relocation of outdoor sports facilities. It states:

- i. The outdoor sports facility which would be lost would be replaced either by a new facility of comparable or greater benefit for sport in a location that is convenient for users, or by the upgrading of an existing outdoor sports facility to provide a facility of better quality on the same site or at another location that is convenient for users and maintains or improves the overall playing capacity in the area; or
- ii. The relevant strategy (see paragraph 224) and consultation with sportscotland show that there is a clear excess of provision to meet current and anticipated demand in the area, and that the site would be developed without detriment to the overall quality of provision.
- iii. SPP defines ‘Outdoor Sports Facilities’ as follows:

Under the SPP definition, the Cricket Pitch at Kings Links would constitute an ‘Outdoor Sports Facility’ and therefore, unless an excess of such provision within the area has been identified, then the national policy position suggests the requirements to replace the facility. It should be noted that neither the Driving Range or general informal open space falls under the above-noted definition. Early consultation with SportScotland is recommended following the identification of preferred development options.

3.13 EIA Scope/Supporting Assessments

3.13.1 As is outlined in Section 4 of this Report, the wider Masterplan proposals (and some of the stand-alone developments within the masterplan) constitute ‘Schedule 2’ development, and therefore there will be a requirement to undertake an ‘EIA Screening’ process to formally establish if an EIA will be required to support the proposals. It is important to stress that EIA requirements, or otherwise, need to be considered further, following any decision being reached on the Masterplan/ development options.

3.14 Consenting Strategy Inc. Marine Licensing

3.14.1 It is anticipated that there are three main options for the consenting strategy for the wider proposals, which are summarised below. It is also relevant to consider where the development proposals sit within the 'Hierarchy of Development' (as a whole and constituent parts), which are noted as follows:

- i. Beachfront Masterplan – GFA greater than 5000m² / site greater than 2ha – Major Development
- ii. Stadium/Leisure – GFA greater than 5000m² / site greater than 2ha – Major Development
- iii. Ballroom – any extension anticipated under 5000m² / less than 2ha site - Local Development
- iv. Public realm/Queens Links/Esplanade and Beachfront upgrades – even if limited built development, site areas likely to be greater than 2ha - Major Development
- v. Given the above categories of development, the following Options for the Consenting Strategy have been initially considered:
 1. Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) for wider Masterplan followed by future individual AMSC applications for each detailed aspect of the Masterplan;
 2. Hybrid Application or Tandem Applications – PPiP (Major) for wider Masterplan, but including sufficient detailed design or separate Planning Application for certain aspects that may require come forward earlier than under Option 1 e.g. Ballroom works or Stadium;
 3. Individual applications for Planning Permission for all aspects of the masterplan activities e.g. Ballroom/Stadium/Leisure/Public Realm, or a combination thereof.

3.14.2 Marine Licensing – Any works within Scottish waters of over 50m in length or 1000m² are 'Licensable'. This would include any Piers, marine construction works and coastal protection works. It is understood that any Licensable works require a pre-application consultation process similar to that required for Major planning applications. As such, subject to further discussions with the relevant authorities, any Licensable works should be considered similar to a Major planning application, and that Planning and Marine License process should be aligned as much as possible.

3.15 Summary

3.15.1 The Masterplan proposals include the development of the Aberdeen Beachfront and the Options presented within this Report include the redevelopment of the existing Beach Ballroom, a new beachfront Stadium, options for Sports/Leisure facilities, and the introduction of ancillary leisure uses, greenspace, hard and

soft landscaping and associated works and access connections as notable improvements to the existing Beachfront and Queens Links offer.

3.15.2 Given the sport, leisure and recreation nature of the wider proposals, there is broad planning policy support for such proposals within national and local planning policy including Scottish Planning Policy and the adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017. Consideration of impacts upon Urban Green Space, the Green Space Network as well as the loss and/or re-provision of 'Outdoor Sports Facilities' will be key considerations, however it is anticipated that these can be effectively managed through the planning process and by the design of the proposals. Given the category of development for the Masterplan area as a whole, it is currently recommended that Planning Permission in Principle (PPiP) be sought for all development within the Masterplan as a whole, followed by AMSC or separate planning applications.

3.16 The Beach Ballroom (Appendix B)

3.16.1 The Beach Ballroom is a unique art deco venue located on the Promenade of Aberdeen's Beachfront. It was built in 1926 and is a Category B listed building.

3.16.2 The venue first opened in 1929, the culmination of a decade of planning and development along the Beachfront which led to the transformation on Aberdeen into a first class holiday resort equipped with a range of entertainment facilities, including the new dance hall.

3.16.3

3.16.4 The approach to the building is currently car-dominated, however an enhanced public realm setting would create a grand entrance to the venue and a real sense of arrival, with opportunities in feature lighting to showcase the impressive art deco façade.

3.16.5 The ACC Vision is for the Beach Ballroom to become 'iconic' once more. The Ballroom was an extremely popular events venue during those early decades through to the 1960s/70s, when it hosted world-famous acts such as The Beatles, The Who and Pink Floyd.

3.16.6 Known affectionately as 'The People's Ballroom', the facility was a real community asset well-used by the people of Aberdeen. The venue was also a popular tourist destination, known as 'Scotland's Finest Dance Hall' the Ballroom regularly attracted crowds from further afield.

3.16.7 Appendix B provides visuals of the current site and facility; high level overview of the constraints; floor plans; section diagrams; opportunities; suggested improvements; conceptual massing study.

3.17 Masterplan (Appendix C)

3.17.1 Appendix C shows 3 initial Masterplan concepts that have been developed taking inspiration from past Aberdeen history around the rope works, tram lines and the groyne protection structures. All three concepts draw upon the history

and the heritage of the Beachfront. The 'Tram Lines' concept uses the linearity of the historic tram line routes. To be clear the concept is not about reinstating trams.

3.18 Leisure and Stadium (Appendix D)

3.18.1 The existing beachfront site has a variety of disparate leisure facilities that are all owned and operated either directly by the Council or commissioned directly through Sport Aberdeen. Each of the sports and leisure elements are discussed in Appendix D. There are three core options for redeveloping the leisure facilities on the existing site. Two involve retaining and refurbishing the Beach Ballroom and a new stadium build for Aberdeen Football Club. Both options are with varying ideas for retention or rebuilding of new facilities for the leisure and ice arena components. The third option is retention or rebuilding of new facilities but with no new stadium.

3.18.2 It should be emphasised that the integration of the sites is key. Integration will significantly reduce all costs through from concept design to build to operations for partners and stakeholders. A high level summary of sustainability and net zero options are also illustrated.

3.19 Public Realm and Landscape (Appendix E)

3.19.1 Aberdeen has 31 km of coastline and the Masterplan area is significant within this - it is where the City and the sea come together. The connection between the City and the coast is key and the two must work together; connecting the experience of these two areas is essential to the success of this Masterplan.

3.19.2 The two ends of the journey from the City to the Beach are rich in character with both the Castlegate and the Beach having strong identities. The roundabout, Beach Boulevard and the Queens Links however do not positively contribute to this journey. The proposals set out within Appendix E aim to explore how this connection can be enhanced both physically, through improving pedestrian and cycle routes, and also in terms of character. The landscape and public realm can be the glue that brings the City and the Beach together. There is an opportunity to extend the character of the City centre further towards the Beach whilst extending the character of the new park back up Beach Boulevard towards the City, shortening the perceived distance between the two. Improvements to Beach Boulevard could then further promote the connection between the City and Beach enhancing the journey and promoting sustainable modes of transport.

3.20 Planning Overview and Summary (Appendix F)

3.20.1 A planning overview and summary is contained within Appendix F. This breakdowns in summary format the Consents required; major/local; consenting strategy; planning principle; EIA/Surveys for each of the components in the aforementioned appendices.

3.21 Sustainability and Energy Strategy (Appendix G)

- 3.21.1 The city is an exemplar in renewable energy development. It has capitalised on the foundation of a global energy sector in the city region. In the immediate study area, the European Offshore Wind Demonstration Centre is operational. The Council has led the piloting and deployment of hydrogen power in transport/ mobility and the Energy Centre at Teca.
- 3.22 The scale of ambition, and potential of Aberdeen to contribute to the UK Government and Scottish Government climate change targets is laid out in the city's Net Zero Vision and supporting Strategic Infrastructure Plan – Energy Transition.
- 3.23 A workstream in the next phase of the masterplanning exercise will be to explore options for embedding net zero principles into any future development and investment. For example, there may be several potential energy *options* for any new facility at the beach, that could be developed over phases or scaled up to an 'energy centre' subject to demand and offtake options. The scale will depend on potential amount of power/ heat a sports/leisure (and any surrounding development) could utilise.
- 3.24 The Council is in the process of procuring a joint venture partner as part of the Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub programme. The response to date from industry has been encouraging, and there could be an option to explore how hydrogen can be adopted into the mix of technologies that could be accommodated for any subsequent development.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The 2021 Budget meeting on 10 March outlined a funding commitment totalling £150M from the General Fund Capital Programme over financial years 2021/22 to 2025/26 to ensure the Council transforms the city centre and beach area.
- 4.2. Following the CG&R Committee on the 11th May 2021 the Council engaged the services of Hub North Scotland in order to commission the required consultancy, design and implementation work. Cost from May 2021 to the end of August 2021 which includes all City Centre work as well as the Beachfront is £647K.
- 4.3. The Council will facilitate the next phase of design works with the Hub North Scotland Limited and the supply chain of current contractors who will undertake works relating to two or more workstreams allowing lower cost. However this does mean that at this stage the work packages cannot be split between projects so to continue with the design work a total estimated cost for the business case works, for ALL projects recommended to be taken forward, is £2.55 million for the Beachfront projects. On completion of the next phase contractors will split their costs between the various work streams.
- 4.4 **Strategy for Cost Development**

- 4.4.1 The proposals outlined above within this masterplan report for the redevelopment of the Beachfront are wide ranging and being largely visionary there is insufficient information available at this stage to make any meaningful assessment of the construction costs involved and level of investment required. Each of the main options identified namely the Rope works conceptual masterplan, the Tram lines conceptual masterplan and the Groynes conceptual masterplan all include various interventions and as part of the next stage there will be a requirement to look at how best to phase and deliver the works.
- 4.4.2 Of the three options the Tram lines conceptual masterplan is likely to be the least expensive to deliver given the opportunity to develop the circulation and movement routes within the existing contours and site constraints as opposed to creating the new fixed and symmetrical routes proposed under the Tram lines and Groynes conceptual masterplans. The new pier structure proposed under the Groynes option also appears to be more dramatic and extensive to that proposed under the Tram lines options albeit both structures require to be developed in more detail.
- 4.4.3 There will be a requirement for different strategies to be adopted for developing construction cost estimates and budgets for the various elements under each conceptual masterplan to reflect the nature of the proposed works being undertaken. The opportunities, challenges and risks associated with the works to refurbish the ballroom, the works to upgrade the public realm, the works to form the new build stadium and leisure facilities and the works to create a new pier structure will be significantly different and it is proposed that these are reflected accordingly within the cost estimates produced.
- 4.4.4 A project of this profile and importance to Aberdeen will require a strong working relationship between all stakeholders and as the cost estimates are developed it is essential that constructive communication, open dialogue and regular contact between all team members and stakeholders is maintained. The key factors noted below shall form the basis of the specific approach which will be taken in establishing robust and realistic budget cost estimates:
- i. Programme – identification of key dates, phasing requirements, outputs and milestones
 - ii. Procurement – identifying appropriate solutions for the various elements of the masterplans and any long lead items
 - iii. Quality – identification of aspirations in terms of quality, sourcing and specification of materials
 - iv. Cost – maintaining cost certainty and confidence for funding partners and stakeholders through close interface and engagement with the project team
- 4.4.5 The key commercial risks relating to the redevelopment of the Stadium and Leisure Facilities will differ depending on whether the existing facilities are retained and reconfigured or demolished and rebuilt. As such these will be

considered in more detail during the next stage but some of the key considerations to be made will include:

- i. A review of the existing utility network and capacities to establish the extent of any enhancements are required
- ii. The extent of renewable energy sources eg photovoltaic panels, ground source heat pumps and the like being provided as part of the overall development
- iii. A review of the car parking provision and whether this is to be accommodated below ground or within above ground stacked car parks
- iv. The extent of extreme sports facilities being created over and above and/or complimentary to what is already there or nearby.
- v. The need for temporary leisure facilities to be provided during the works to compensate for the loss the current facilities being provided
- vi. The cost of relocating other users eg the cricket pitch and driving range in advance of new construction works commencing

4.4.6 As things progress through the next stage to November 2021 we will ensure a proactive approach will be taken to cost control and iterative cost advice will be provided to guide and inform design. This will help aid decision making in keeping with time constraints and assist in ensuring the optimum design is achieved.

4.4.7 Benchmark cost data from specialist contractors and from an extensive cost planning database will be continually referred to as this will help anchor the various elements of the masterplan options against comparable data. From this very close interrogation and control optimum high level strategic aims can be delivered alongside the robust checking of budget allowances for each element of the project

4.4.8 In addition to providing initial, feasibility and detailed cost plans the team will undertake a compilation of data from previous projects to produce realistic forecasts. The data will also be used to generate 'benchmarking' and life cycle cost studies to ensure the delivery of the brief and to confirm value for money. The cost plans developed will be designed to:

- i. Focus on the key issues by capturing all relevant data, capital cost, project benchmarking, value engineering opportunities together with design and construction risk identification and solutions.
- ii. Contain detailed and transparent cost and specification information for the clear communication of cost and specification parameters within which the projects are to be delivered.
- iii. Create a 'live' document which is capable of being frozen at key project design stages

- 4.4.9 In addition to the cost plans indicative cash flow forecasts linked to any phasing requirements or proposals will be provided to provide an indication of future expenditure on the projects during the delivery stages.
- 4.4.10 The cost plans will also draw out areas for more detailed examination and review. Examples of the commercial risks associated with various elements are noted above and these together with any other risks identified will form a focus to ensure these are managed and mitigated as much as possible.
- 4.4.11 A key technique used successfully on many other large projects is what we refer to as 'cost modelling' and the intention is that this is adopted during the next stage. As designs progress allowing cost estimates to be developed beyond overall benchmark costs per m² rates our intention is to produce cost models for various aspects of the masterplan proposals. These cost models are developed in conjunction with the entire design team and effectively set a series of agreed target elemental cost plan allowances which are then used to control and monitor cost throughout all future stages of design. This has proved to be a powerful tool during the early development of projects and has the benefit of highlighting any potential cost issues early in the process thereby minimising the risk of abortive work being undertaken.
- 4.4.12 In addition to the strategy outlined above for developing cost estimates during the next stage consideration will be given during the next stage to how the works should be procured. The nature of works being proposed is such that it may be appropriate to procure the works separately with potentially different Contractors with the necessary skills and experience being appointed to deliver each aspect of the masterplan rather than appointing one overall Contractor.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. In order to fully understand land ownership patterns in the beach area, officers are currently compiling up to date land and building ownership, leases, covenants etc. This requires the examination of a large number of very old and lengthy handwritten title deeds and Acts, stretching back over the last 100 years.
- 5.2. A visual plan has been instructed from Millar & Bryce Limited who are working with legal services on the title checks, and work has commenced to plot the ownerships, leases and any other relevant rights.
- 5.3. To date, there is no evidence to suggest that the Council does not currently own the ground at the beachfront of the review area. Work to verify the position will continue.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The recommendations contained within this report and the assessment of risk contained within the table below are considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement. The risk ratings specified reflect the risk

level post-mitigation assuming that the mitigation actions will be implemented and completed.

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Risks inherent in not addressing the changing circumstances in the city centre will have a significant effect on the delivery of our city and regional economic strategies	L	Review update and reprioritise masterplan objectives and delivery programme as set out in this report
Compliance	No significant risks identified.		
Operational	Resource capacity for our staff involved in the review	L	Hub North Scotland have been appointed to support the review and provide project management support
Legal	The Council does not have full control over the land within the review area due to unknown legal restrictions and/or rights held by third parties. Any legal restrictions (e.g., identification of common good land) and/or other rights	M	As set out in Section 5 above, title checks are continuing to verify the land interests within the review area.

	held by third parties could negatively impact the ability to deliver elements of the masterplan.		
Financial	It is expected that there will be emerging financial implications as a result of this paper being approved, particularly around where best to support recovery	H	Financial implications for the Council in terms of city centre recovery and programme delivery will be identified through the review An economic appraisal of any projects will be undertaken to articulate the net benefits of any intervention
Reputational	Not carrying out the review and identifying appropriate short, medium and long term actions would have significant reputational damage for the Council as a “place leader”	M	Undertaking the necessary review and taking appropriate action in the short term will assist in building confidence in the city
Environment/Climate	Environment and climate implications may potentially be in danger of being undermined in favour of short term economic gains	M	Any risks will take into account the Council’s own Net Zero targets and be embedded in the masterplan review

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	<p>Supports the delivery of Economy Policy Statement 4 – Increase city centre footfall through delivery of the City Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>7 – Continue to maximise community benefit from major developments.</p>
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 1 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 7 Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>Supports Outcome 14 Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate</p> <p>Supports Outcome 15 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026</p>
Regional and City Strategies	The report supports the priorities in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) investment in infrastructure, regenerating our city centre, unlock development potential, improve the deployment of low carbon transport, to enable Aberdeen to realise development opportunities in the City Centre Masterplan. It contributes directly to the objectives in

	the city's destination plan and the role of the city centre beach in attracting visitors to the city and its wider attractions.
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	An Assessment will be carried out as an integral part of the masterplanning process.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required at this stage.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan

10. APPENDICES

- A – Engineering Site Appraisal
- B – Beach Ballroom
- C – Masterplan
- D – Leisure & Stadium
- E – Realm & Landscape
- F – Planning Overview & Summary
- G – Sustainability & Energy Strategy

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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